Corporation of the City of
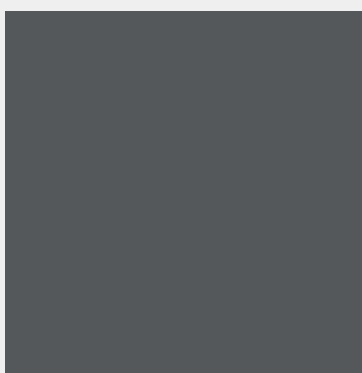**NEW WESTMINSTER**

Attachment 1: New Westminster

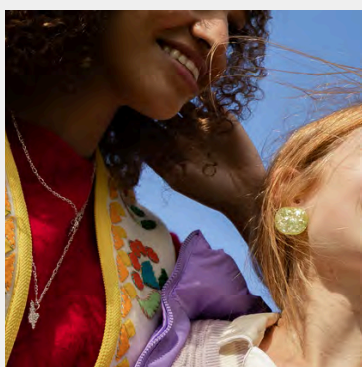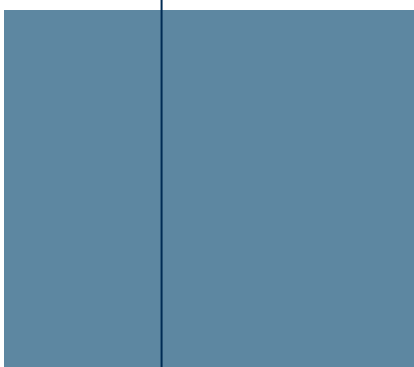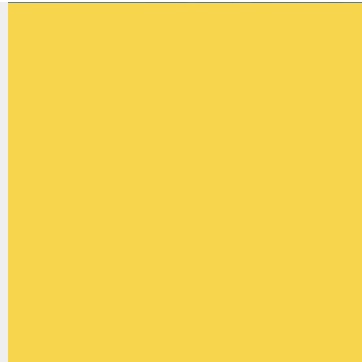*Youth Resiliency Strategy*

2024/2025
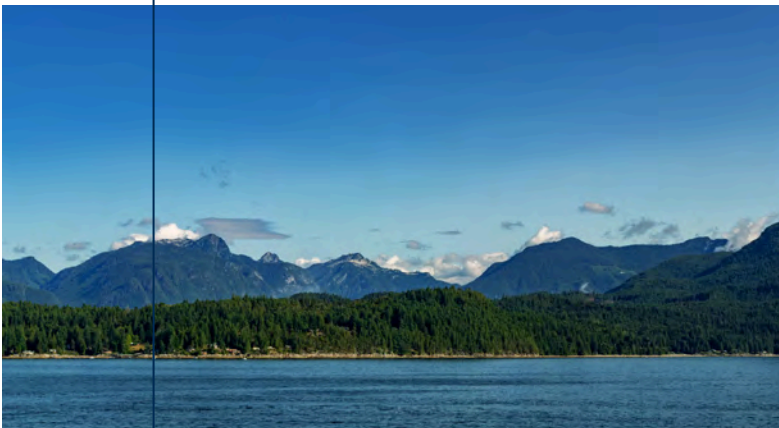
YOUTH RESILIENCE
STRATEGY
2024/2025

NEW WESTMINSTER

Acknowledging the Land

We recognize and respect that New Westminster is on the traditional, unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples, including the q̓ʷaːńƛ̓əń (Kwantlen), xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), qiqéyt (Qayqayt), se'mya'me (Semiahmoo), scəw̓aθən məsteyəxʷ (Tsawwassen) and səlilwətaɫ (Tsleil-Waututh) nations. We acknowledge the impact of colonization, forced displacement, the historic injustices and ongoing struggles faced by Indigenous Peoples. As a City, we are committed to listening, learning, and working towards reconciliation by respecting and honouring the varied vibrant cultures, revitalization of languages, Indigenous world views, customs, and traditions.

With Gratitude

The New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy was made possible through the insights, efforts, and participation of the city's youth, educators, families, frontline workers, and partner organizations. This work reflects the lived experiences of local youth and the shared commitment of the community to create safer, more supportive, and inclusive environments for young people to thrive.

To the youth of New Westminster – thank you for your honesty, courage, and thoughtfulness in sharing your experiences, needs, and ideas. Whether through workshops, surveys, or design labs, your voices are the foundation of this strategy.

To the teachers, counselors, and school administrators who opened up space for youth to participate and made engagement possible during school hours – thank you for your continued dedication to student well-being and leadership.

To the youth workers, social service providers, and frontline staff – thank you for offering your perspectives and for championing the voices of youth you work with. Your input helped shape the strategy from a systems and support lens.

To the municipal staff, police, and community organizations – thank you for your collaboration and contributions to a coordinated vision of youth safety and support in New West.

To the parents, caregivers, and community members who took time to share their observations and concerns – your participation has deepened our collective understanding of how to best support young people in this city.

And finally, to everyone who contributed their time, insights, and energy – thank you. Your contributions will have a lasting impact on how New Westminster supports youth resilience today and into the future.

Contents

The New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy

The New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy is a comprehensive initiative aimed at addressing challenges faced by youth in New Westminster[1], British Columbia. Funded by Public Safety Canada's Building Safer Communities Fund (BSCF), this project is coordinated by the City of New Westminster in collaboration with local non-profit organizations, youth, and key partners (City of New Westminster, n.d.).

The BSCF is a federal program designed to support municipalities and Indigenous communities in their efforts to combat gun and gang violence by providing funding for community-led projects that address the root causes of crime and enhance public safety (Public Safety Canada, n.d.). Announced in 2022, the BSCF represents a $250 million investment over five years to foster safer communities through prevention and intervention strategies (Government of Canada, 2022). In February 2023, New Westminster received up to $1.73 million to implement new and innovative programs supporting youth aged 12–25 by providing basic needs and alternatives that divert them away from gang involvement (Government of Canada, 2023).

Reading the Report

The New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy report is written to focus on the key elements and the strategy, leaving the deep analysis and data summaries within the appendices. As you read the report, look for the icon below to guide you to the appropriate appendices for all the extra details and data.

[1] New Westminster is comprised of neighbourhoods on both the mainland as well as Queensborough on Lulu Island

Key BSCF Initiatives Funded in New Westminster Include:

- Implementation of the New Westminster Situation Table: A risk-based, collaborative, triage model to effectively respond to individuals or families who are facing circumstances of elevated risk; as recognized across multiple human services lenses. The table works to effectively mitigate risk by supporting vulnerable young people (aged 12-25 years old) and their families by identifying appropriate resources and offering a multi-agency, coordinated and collaborative response aligned with the individual needs. Ultimately, creating wrap around services and alternative pathways to prevent gang involvement.

- Creating the New Westminster Youth Hub: Operated by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, this hub provides a safe and welcoming space where youth can connect with peers, access services, and receive mentorship in the downtown core (Lower Mainland Purpose Society, n.d.).

- Opening Dan's Diner: A social enterprise café operated by Dan's Legacy, which offers at-risk youth opportunities to gain job skills in the food service industry while receiving essential clinical support (Dan's Legacy, 2023).

- Development of Prevention Programs: Educational programs in partnership with School District 40 and Her Time, a girls program to empower young females to stay safe and healthy.

Finally, the City has undertaken and funded the Development of a City-wide Youth Resilience Strategy. The New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy aims to create a supportive environment where young people can thrive, free from the influences of gangs and violence. By leveraging federal funding and fostering community collaboration, the City of New Westminster is taking proactive steps to ensure the safety and well-being of its youth population. This is the report that has been created from this process: The New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy.

Listening to Build the Plan

The development of the New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy was grounded in an extensive engagement process designed to capture the voices and experiences of youth, families, service providers, educators, and community leaders. Over the course of a year, this process included workshops, focus groups, surveys, and creative engagement sessions aimed at understanding the unique challenges faced by youth and identifying opportunities to strengthen their resilience. In total, over 400 youth, residents, and stakeholders were engaged in the process.
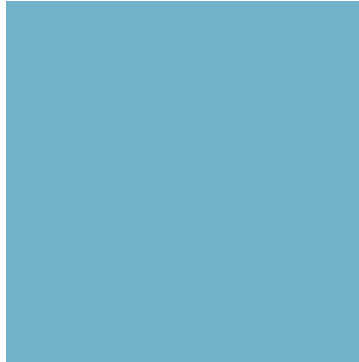
Engaging the Project Team - January 2024
Participants: City of New Westminster staff and project sponsors
Purpose: Establish the vision and framework for the Youth Resilience Strategy.

Interviews and Focus Groups - February 2024
Participants: Key informants from youth services, youth probation, School District No. 40, NWPD, City staff
Purpose: Gained an understanding of youth safety challenges and gather insights on stakeholder engagement. Early themes included youth violence, online and public safety concerns, social media impact, and the need for community connection and safe spaces.

Direct Youth Engagement - April 2024
Participants: Students at New Westminster High School, Purpose Society YOUth HUB
Purpose: Gathered insights from youth, particularly vulnerable groups, on their experiences and challenges.

Service Provider Workshop - April 2024
Participants: Various youth-serving organizations
Purpose: Gathered insights from youth, particularly vulnerable groups, on their experiences and challenges.

Youth Week Poster Session - May 2024
Participants: Youth at New Westminster Youth Centre
Purpose: Gathered insights from youth, particularly vulnerable groups, on their experiences and challenges.

Purpose Society In-Depth Engagement - May 2024
Participants: Purpose Society
Purpose: Explored systemic issues and how PACT services can bridge gaps in youth support systems.

Second Community Visit - June 2024
Participants: Community service providers, families, students, service providers
Purpose: Engageed community through design labs, family sessions, and stakeholder collaborations to design youth interventions.

Aunt Leah's Youth Advisory Council - June 2024
Participants: Aunt Leah's Youth Advisory Council
Purpose: Included voices of vulnerable youth, such as those aging out of the care system, in shaping the strategy.

Youth Services Leadership Meeting - June 2024
Participants: Leadership team from City of New Westminster Youth Services
Purpose: Understand observations of youth needs from the perspective of youth programming leadership staff.

McCreary Centre Society - September 2024
Participants: McCreary Centre Society Staff
Purpose: Gained insight into the 2023 BC Adolescent Youth Survey results for the Fraser North division.

New Westminster School District - September 2024
Participants: Senior Administration from School District No. 40
Purpose: Validated the status of the data before developing the Youth Validation Survey.

NWPD Gang Suppression Unit - October 2024
Participants: NWPD officers
Purpose: Ensured consistency of data and gather insights from officers on youth and gang-related issues.

Youth Validation Survey - November 2024
Participants: 124 youth respondents
Purpose: Validated key themes and ensure youth voices are represented in the strategies, actions, and context of youth safety in New Westminster.

Queensborough School Administration and Staff - December 2024
Participants: Queensborough School staff and administration
Purpose: Learned about youth experiences in Queensborough from the perspective of school administration and staff.

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The Best of New West

Even as this project worked to identify key gaps and opportunities for youth, there were many community assets celebrated by youth, stakeholders, and the community that need to be shared. Community assets form a foundation for amplification by empowering the community to do more of what already works well for youth.

Some of the assets often shared by youth include (but are not limited to):

Youth Centre and Afterschool Programs

The many parks and outdoor spaces to gather

The new təməsew̓txʷ Aquatic and Community Centre

Friendly people around the city

The many positive adults in their lives (teachers, support workers, parents, and friends)

Great and fun community events - like the craft markets and events at the Quay
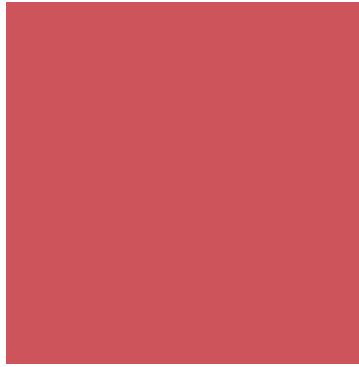
The public art across the community

Cool and welcoming local businesses

Stakeholders also participated in asset mapping and helped generate a list of well over *100* existing supports and services for youth in the community including sports, recreation, arts, culture, and deeper supports such as counselling, therapy, and others.

New Westminster is a community that is rich in assets for youth and their families. While there are some emerging gaps and opportunities to further build youth resilience, there is clearly a strong foundation to amplify.

Insights from Youth

Youth consistently described safety as more than the absence of harm; for them, it is about connection, inclusion, and support. They emphasized the need for caring adults who are approachable, trustworthy, and genuinely invested in their well-being.

"Having someone you can talk to when things feel overwhelming makes all the difference."

This sentiment was echoed across engagement sessions, where youth called for stronger mentorship and the presence of supportive adults in schools, youth hubs, and public spaces.

A recurring theme was the importance of safe spaces where youth can express themselves freely without fear of judgment, bullying, or discrimination. These spaces included youth hubs, schools, recreational facilities, and transit areas, which were seen as critical for fostering community connection. Many youth noted feeling unsafe in certain spaces, particularly on public transit after dark, in schools with insufficient supervision, and in areas where substance use or violence was visible. One youth remarked,

"Parks and stations feel unsafe when there's no one watching out for you."

Youth also articulated a strong desire for opportunities to thrive through engagement in leadership, arts, sports, and mentorship programs. These activities were seen as not only protective factors but also pathways to building confidence and a sense of purpose. These connections are vital to youth as they help create connections and as one youth said,

"It's about knowing there are people who have your back".

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Appendix A

Perspectives from Stakeholders

Service providers, educators, and families identified systemic gaps in coordination and communication as significant barriers to youth resilience. Stakeholders expressed concern about the lack of alignment across services, noting that youth often struggle to navigate the fragmented system of supports available to them. They also highlighted the need for trauma-informed practices, particularly for youth facing mental health challenges, social isolation, or discrimination.

Educators emphasized the importance of early intervention and the role of schools as hubs for connecting youth to services. However, some stakeholders identified the loss of an enforcement presence in schools and public areas, without a visible replacement to support intervention in those areas, as a significant gap that has impacted their ability to address safety concerns effectively.

Families and community leaders shared several concerns including equitable access to services and the regional nature of youth safety issues. Community members in areas such as Queensborough shared challenges in accessing services in New Westminster due to transportation challenges and distance. One resident shared they are unable to access swimming lessons at the new recreation centre as it is not possible to find a matching time due to bus schedules and distance.

Residents also shared that regional issues impact their youth and are concerned about gang or other criminal activity from surrounding areas. They emphasized the need for collaboration across municipalities to address shared challenges, such as gang recruitment and substance use, which transcend city boundaries.

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As it relates to firearms, there have been no youth (12-17) charged or not charged with any firearms related criminal code violations in New Westminster (Statistics Canada, 2024b).

Appendix C

Community Data

The analysis of crime data related to youth in New Westminster reveals a nuanced picture of safety in the community. While there have been localized increases in youth-involved violent crime and non-firearm weapon-related incidents in recent years, these rates remain lower than historical highs observed over the past two decades. This trend reflects broader national patterns of declining youth crime rates, even as specific challenges persist at the local level.

For example, data from the New Westminster Police Department (NWPD) indicates that offenses such as theft, assault, and weapon-related violations saw increases between 2019 and 2023, aligning with trends seen in other communities post-pandemic. However, projections for 2024 suggest a potential decrease in youth-involved crime, signaling the possible impact of ongoing prevention and intervention efforts (New Westminster Police Department, 2024).

Overall, while youth crime levels in New Westminster remain relatively low compared to historical benchmarks, the data underscores the importance of proactive measures. Sustained attention to prevention, intervention, and collaboration across agencies will be key to addressing emerging challenges and ensuring the community remains a safe and supportive environment for all youth. These insights further support the need for a coordinated Youth Resilience Strategy that focuses on long-term safety and well-being.
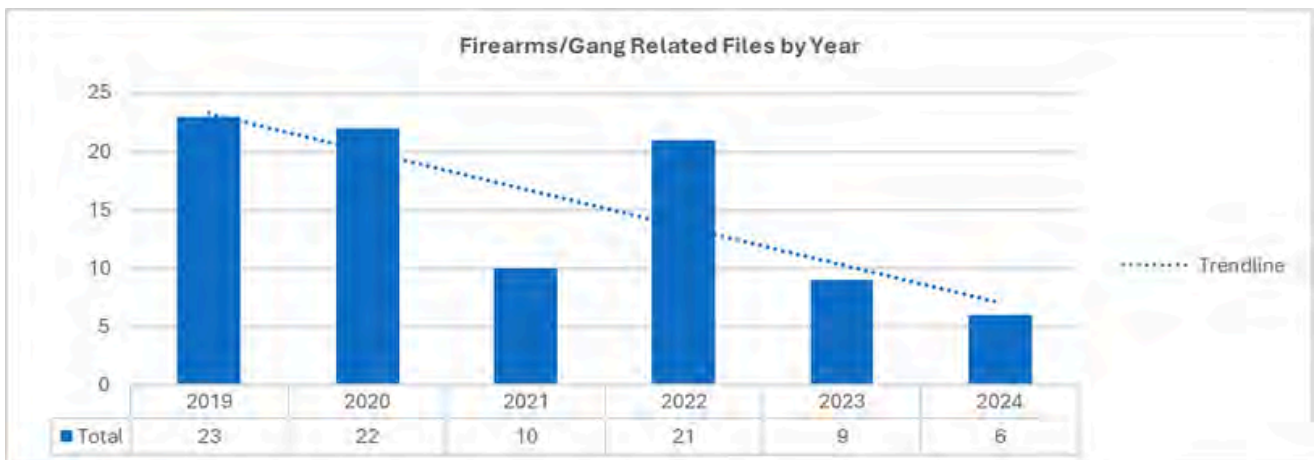
Firearms/Gang Related Files by Year

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total	23	22	10	21	9	6

New Westminster Police Department Firearms/Gang Related Files by Year. (Source: New Westminster Police Department, 2024)

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Appendix B

Youth and Community Defined Priorities

Resulting from the engagement and data analysis are four emerging priorities defined by youth, the community, and stakeholders.

- Safety in Schools and Public Spaces
- Personal Safety for Youth
- Positive Adult Connections and Role Models
- Access to Programs and Services
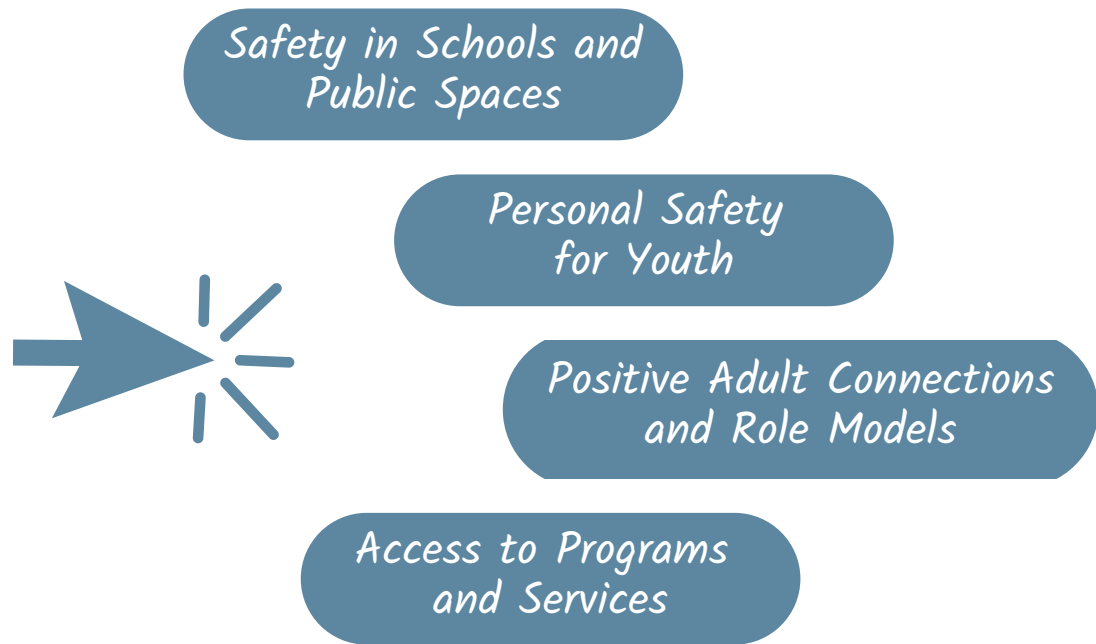
Safety in Schools and Public Spaces

In New Westminster, young people are navigating daily life with varied experiences of safety—at school, in parks, on transit, and even in spaces meant just for them. Some youth described being harassed or singled out for how they look, intimidated by strangers, and feeling like no one is around to help if something goes wrong. Schools sometimes feel unsafe too—not because of the learning, but because of the uncertainty.

Safety isn't just a feeling—it's part of the foundation of how youth show up in the world. When youth constantly scan their surroundings or feel they need to avoid certain places, it chips away at their confidence, trust, and capacity to learn or build connections. Without safety, youth may not feel free to be themselves or engage fully in life.

Key Indicators

A recent student voice project indicates **80%** of youth feel safe at the Secondary School
(Student Voice, 2024)

10% rarely or never

always **35%**

feel safe in public spaces
(City of New Westminster, 2024)

79% (2013)

65% (2023)

Safety at school
(McCreary Centre Society, 2024)

57%
of youth always feel safe in youth spaces - nearly half with inconsistent feelings of safety
(City of New Westminster, 2024)
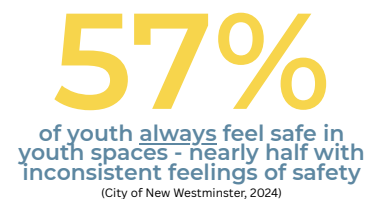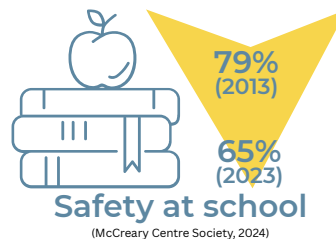
The Importance of Action

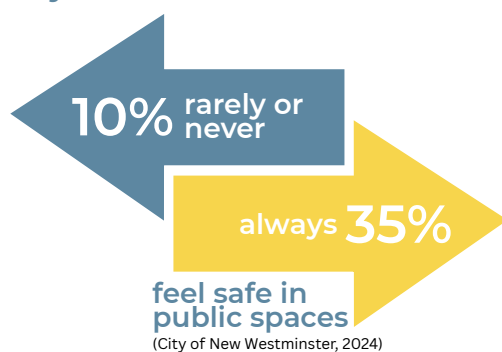The environment youth move through every day deeply shapes their mental health, academic success, and future outcomes. A perceived or real lack of safety raises levels of stress, which is linked to depression, disengagement, and risky behavior (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015). In a city as interconnected as New Westminster—with shared public spaces and a history of vibrant youth programming—the community must ensure these shared environments are welcoming and secure.

Strategies that increase adult visibility, maintain school and public facilities, and respond quickly to concerns are key. This is not only about policing—it's about belonging and infrastructure. If left unchecked, fear can calcify into distrust and disconnection. As one youth said, "Knowing I have a community I can rely on keeps me feeling safe." That sense of community must be actively cultivated.

"Knowing I have a community I can rely on keeps me feeling safe."

Personal Safety for Youth

Many youth are trying to navigate a world where variable experiences of bullying, discrimination, harassment, and pressure to conform are still very real. Some youth are responding by arming themselves (psychologically and physically). Not because they want to hurt others, but because they feel they need to defend themselves.

When youth feel their safety is in their own hands, and not the community's responsibility, they may begin to internalize fear. Carrying a weapon or avoiding people becomes a survival strategy. At that point, they are no longer developing with confidence—they're living on alert. And that takes a toll.

Key Indicators

- **36%** of youth in grades 10–12 experienced social bullying; **45%** of younger youth reported the same (Samji et al., 2023; Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023).

- **25% of boys** and **45% of girls** experienced verbal sexual harassment (McCreary Centre Society, 2024).

- **20%** of youth reported carrying a weapon in the past 3 months (City of New Westminster, 2024).

- **15%** said someone tried to get them involved in a gang or unsafe group (City of New Westminster, 2024).

- **17%** said they were discriminated against due to race or skin colour (McCreary Centre Society, 2024).

The Importance of Action

Bullying, harassment, and discrimination create real trauma. If these patterns persist, youth are at higher risk of anxiety, substance use, self-harm, and justice system involvement (Finkelhor et al., 2015). New Westminster has the chance to disrupt this pattern by treating youth personal safety as a community responsibility. That includes addressing the conditions that make youth feel so alone they believe a weapon is their only protection. Safety isn't just about preventing harm—it's about helping youth feel seen, believed, and backed up.

Positive Adult Connections and Role Models

Youth repeatedly shared they desire more adults in their lives who they feel truly care—not just teachers enforcing rules or enforcement showing up when things go wrong, but people who listen, who check in, and who show up when it matters. While many youth feel supported at home, community-based relationships are more variable.

When a young person has even one adult who believes in them, listens without judgment, and offers support, it can change their whole path. Without these connections, youth are more vulnerable to mental health challenges, social isolation, and risky behavior.

Key Indicators

Teachers, family, and youth workers were the top three adults youth said could make them feel safer

(City of New Westminster, 2024)

25% of youth felt they didn't have a single adult in the community who cared about them

(McCreary Centre Society, 2024)

67% of youth said more trained adults in schools would help them feel safer

(City of New Westminster, 2024)

43% of youth had low agreement with the statement: "An adult in my neighborhood really cares about me"

(Samji et al., 2023)

Only **38%** of youth reported strong adult connections in the community, compared to **69%** at home

(Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023)

The Importance of Action

Relationships with adults are one of the most powerful protective factors in a youth's life (Search Institute, 2018). But those connections don't happen automatically. They require investment, training, and intentional design—especially in community settings. If the gap is not closed, youth risk turning to peers or online spaces that may not be safe or supportive.

It can also risk reinforcing the idea that adults can't be trusted. The presence of caring adults—whether mentors, coaches, youth workers, or volunteers—helps build a safety net that youth know they can turn to. This can help reduce youth involvement in criminal activities, gang violence, or other negative behaviors.

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Access to Programs and Services

Youth in New Westminster want to be active, involved, and learning new skills—and some feel shut out. Whether it's because programs are too expensive, hard to find, or intimidating to join, barriers are keeping youth from spaces that build confidence, skills, and relationships. An additional complication is for youth living in Queensborough who experience additional barriers of distance and transportation to core services and programs in the City.

Youth also shared that when they do need help—especially for mental health—support isn't always accessible. Fear of judgment, long waitlists, and a lack of clear information are felt barriers from getting the help youth need, when they need it.

When youth can't access programs or services, especially during critical periods, they can miss out on friendships, mentorship, and support systems that buffer stress and build life skills. It's not just about recreation—it's about readiness and resilience.

Key Indicators

35% of youth who needed mental health services didn't access them
(McCreary Centre Society, 2024)

47% of youth said fear of judgment stopped them from getting help
(City of New Westminster, 2024)

19% of youth are not confident they know where to go for help
(City of New Westminster, 2024)

36% said cost was a barrier to joining programs
(City of New Westminster, 2024)

18% of youth reported not participating in any extracurricular activities
(Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023)

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The Importance of Action

The more barriers youth face, the more they fall through the cracks. Research shows that participation in out-of-school programs is linked to better academic performance, lower substance use, and stronger social-emotional skills (Durlak et al., 2010). But access must be equitable. That means removing cost, providing transportation, creating inclusive environments, and ensuring youth feel welcome.

For young people in New Westminster to thrive, services and programs need to meet them where they are—emotionally, socially, and physically—and make it easier to step into opportunities that help them grow in ways that reduce the likelihood of youth participating in violent or gang related activities.

An Introduction to Youth Resilience

Youth by definition are considered to be vulnerable due to age, developmental stages, and dependence on others for their care and protection. This report focuses on how youth can reduce their vulnerabilities by enhancing protective factors that encourage and develop resilience in youth.

Youth resilience refers to the ability of young people to adapt, thrive, and overcome challenges such as family difficulties, societal pressures, or trauma (Ungar, 2008). Beyond the individual's ability to cope with adversity, resilience is also "the capacity of the person's community to provide the health resources necessary to nurture and sustain well-being, providing individuals opportunities to access health resources in culturally relevant ways" (Ungar, 2008, p.2). In the Canadian context, resilience must be understood within the diversity of the country's population and the range of challenges young people face. Research shows that resilience is not only about individual traits but also shaped by broader social contexts, including access to resources and support systems (Ungar, 2008; Wall et al., 2020).

Resilience is influenced by both individual coping strategies and the social and systemic factors that affect young people's lives. Access to education, healthcare, culture, recreation, and economic opportunities are all essential in fostering resilience (Fleming & Ledogar, 2008; Wall et al., 2020). When these resources are lacking, it can be more difficult for young people to develop the resilience needed to thrive. Furthermore, supportive relationships—whether from family, peers, or community organizations—are key in helping youth navigate adversity (Luthar, 2015; Wall et al., 2020).

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Cultural identity and community connection play a critical role in resilience. Many youth derive strength from their sense of belonging to a particular community or culture, and positive connections to these groups help foster resilience (Ungar, 2008; Wall et al., 2020). For example, communities that provide mentorship, advocacy, and supportive environments contribute to a young person's capacity to overcome challenges (Theron et al., 2015). Indigenous youth who are connected to culture and community exhibit increased psychosocial outcomes and dramatically reduced rates of suicide (Wall et al., 2020). Research emphasizes that these forms of social support and community resources are especially crucial for youth as they manage the pressures of adolescence and early adulthood.

Mental health is another significant aspect of resilience. Young people frequently face challenges such as stress, anxiety, or trauma, which can compromise their ability to cope with adversity (Masten, 2014). Access to mental health resources is essential for developing resilience and promoting overall well-being. Additionally, fostering empowerment and encouraging youth to take an active role in shaping their environments can strengthen their ability to bounce back from difficulties (Masten & Barnes, 2018).

Social Development

Prevention

Risk Intervention

Incident Response

Similar to community safety, youth resilience can be viewed through a multi-dimensional model that ensures youth have access to balanced resilience building supports across the spectrum of needs from incident response to social development.

This model, adapted from Public Safety Canada (2021), can become part of a framework for youth resilience. It serves as a reminder that youth thrive and build resilience when they have incident response and risk intervention supports they can count on, along with prevention services that keep youth at most risk from falling down the cracks while all youth also have access to social development programs that build resilience through recreation, arts and social activities.

In the context of New Westminster, the key factors that are under consideration as negatively impacting youth resilience include access to positive adults, mental well-being supports, life satisfaction, involvement in gangs, use of weapons, and the presence of bullying, among others. The intention of this strategy is to identify the extent to which these risk factors are present for youth in New Westminster and the extent to which existing protective factors support their ability to be resilient in the face of those risk factors.
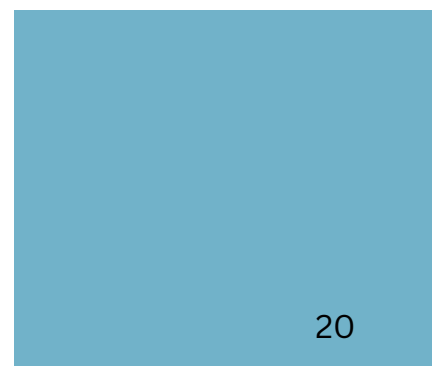
Appendix D

Youth Resilience in Action

Imagine a New Westminster where every young person feels a deep sense of safety, belonging, and opportunity. A future where youth are no longer burdened by fears of violence, bullying, or discrimination but instead thrive in a community that actively listens to their voices and supports their aspirations. In this future, youth define safety as having caring adults who are present and engaged, knowing they can walk through parks, ride public transit, and attend school without worry. They see safety as the freedom to express themselves, to feel welcomed and valued in every space they enter.

New Westminster is a community where every young person feels safe, valued, and empowered to thrive—connected to caring adults, inclusive spaces, and opportunities that build resilience and inspire a brighter future.

This vision is not built from scratch—it amplifies the existing strengths and protective factors that have already laid the foundation for youth resiliency. New Westminster's vibrant network of youth hubs, recreation centers, and low-barrier programs serve as essential lifelines, offering spaces for young people to connect with peers, explore their passions, and find mentorship.

Stakeholders have envisioned a system where services are not just accessible but actively reaching out, meeting youth where they are. Mental health services become seamless and stigma-free, ensuring all youth can access help without barriers. Trusted mentors, community leaders, and youth workers create environments where every young person has multiple caring adults they can turn to. Recreational spaces and schools become thriving centers of creativity and support, offering diverse programs that reflect youth interests, from sports to arts, leadership to career development.

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In this future, collaboration replaces silos, and every corner of the city is a safe, vibrant space for youth to grow. The efforts to build a positive foundation are clearly paying off —youth feel empowered, safe, and connected. New Westminster has the opportunity to build on this foundation through a combination of applying best practice in youth social development along with strategic action in areas that youth will benefit from most.

Appendix D provides some example stories, inspired by real youth in New Westminster, to help bring resilience to life. They can be used in future communication or to bring new awareness to what different youth in the community experience today, and why the future vision is so important.
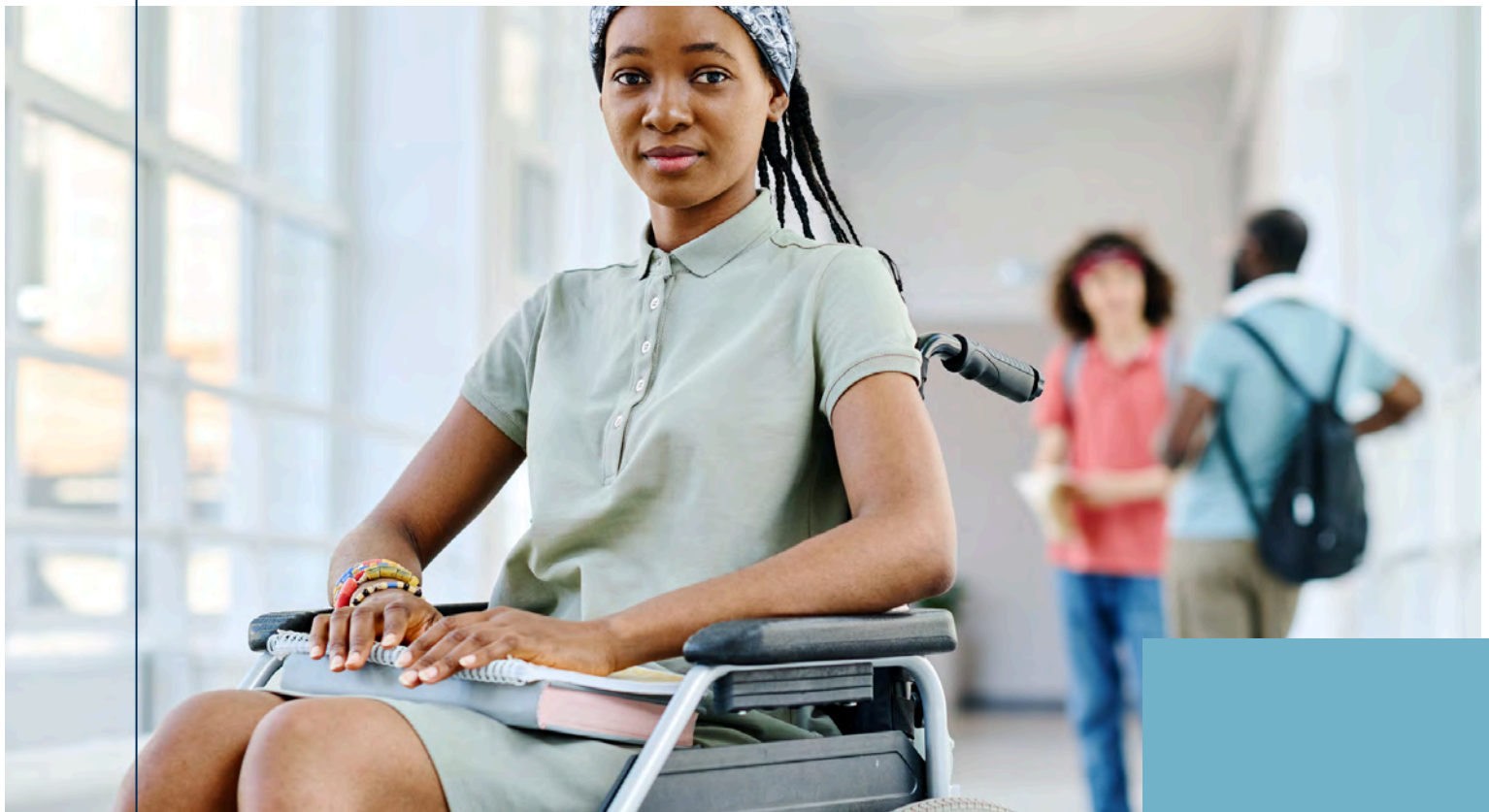
A Framework for Youth Resilience

New Westminster is on a positive trajectory in supporting youth resilience with demonstrated success in several areas. To enhance the work already underway and provide supportive guidance moving forward, the following framework has been identified to combine best practice in social development in a way specific to youth resilience in the community.

The framework is comprised of four components including shared principles, a matrix of roles and responsibilities, a model for collaboration, and a layered model of youth safety.

Youth Resilience Framework

THE RIGHT ROLE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Matching the best fit role for the municipality across all strategies and actions now and into the future.

A COLLABORATIVE MODEL

Collaboration functions best with a shared understanding of the different forms of collaboration, and when to apply each one successfuly.

The Right Role at the Right Time

A Collaborative Model

Shared Principles

Layers of Safety

SHARED PRINCIPLES

Shared principles ground the long-term framework for youth resilience, providing guidance to how the community moves forward together.

LAYERS OF SAFETY

Community safety is supported through four layers of safety; incident response, intervention, prevention, and social development.

Foundational Principles

New Westminster's identity as a tight-knit, inclusive, and innovative community forms the foundation for a framework that will guide strategies and actions to foster youth resilience. These principles reflect the shared values of the City and its commitment to empowering young people to thrive. By rooting resilience efforts in the core strengths and character of New Westminster, these principles provide a solid framework for creating meaningful and lasting change. The principles shape the recommendations and framework, providing a continuous guiding post for decision-making and policy application.

Throughout the process of listening to youth and the community, key themes emerged that shaped the development of these principles. Youth consistently expressed their desire for connection, inclusion, and empowerment, while community members emphasized collaboration and equity as essential to success. These principles reflect the aspirations shared by youth and stakeholders alike—a vision of a city that works together to address challenges, values every voice, and builds a future where all young people can succeed.

Collective Approach
We go together and work as a whole

New Westminster's history and culture emphasize the importance of collaboration and community connection. Whether it's the City's vibrant festivals, recreational programs, or thriving youth hubs, working together is a defining feature of local identity. A collective approach to resilience ensures that stakeholders—youth, families, service providers, schools, and local government—come together to create holistic solutions. Youth shared that they want a city where they feel supported and connected.

Anti-Racist and Inclusive
Solutions account for diversity and are responsive to needs

As one of the most diverse communities in British Columbia, New Westminster recognizes that inclusivity is essential for resilience. Solutions, actions, and strategies must address systemic barriers, reflect cultural and social diversity, and prioritize the voices of historically marginalized groups. Youth spoke passionately about the importance of inclusion. From newcomers to Indigenous youth, inclusivity means ensuring that every young person feels seen, valued, and supported. By embedding anti-racist and inclusive practices into every action, New Westminster builds a city where youth of all backgrounds can succeed.

Research-Based
Grounded in local and external research

New Westminster has a history of innovation and adaptability, making research a natural cornerstone of its approach to resilience. By combining data from local engagement with evidence-based practices from other communities, the City can craft strategies that are both informed and practical. Community stakeholders highlighted the need for solutions that reflect what we see in real time while also drawing from best practices to ensure programs are impactful and sustainable.

Informed by Youth
Youth drive design and implementation

New Westminster's youth have consistently demonstrated their capacity for leadership, creativity, and vision. By actively involving young people in the design, development, and implementation of strategies, the City reinforces their role as partners in resilience. Youth emphasized the importance of being included in decision-making. This principle ensures that solutions are relevant, effective, and grounded in the lived experiences of the youth they are intended to serve.

Roles and Responsibilities

Municipalities have a wide range of roles and responsibilities for their communities. Some responsibilities are legislated through documents such as the Local Government Act, while some are assumed or implied based on individual community context.

Municipalities that can frame how they identify an appropriate level of responsibility, and corresponding role, are often able to respond consistently to emerging social needs or other community level concerns.

New Westminster can utilize a simple framework to help identify and create consistency in how it identifies a level of responsibility including primary, shared, and complementary.

Primary → The municipality has a central role or legislated mandate to respond.

Shared → The municipality is one of many partners capable of making a contribution to a community challenge.

Complementary → Other groups of agencies have primary responsibilities and the municipality can provide support as an ally or partner.
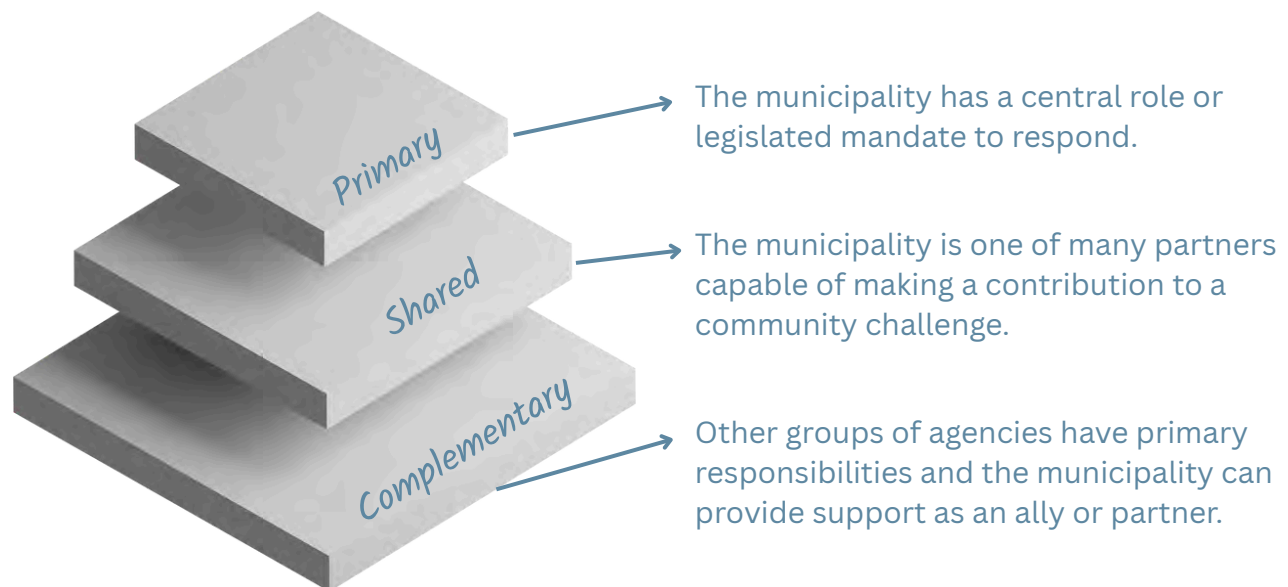
Within all levels of responsibility, a municipality can also identify the ideal role(s) they are best suited for each instance. For example, while affordable housing is largely a Provincial responsibility, a municipality has many levers to control regulation (e.g. land use bylaws) or resources (e.g. funding, human resources, knowledge, data, etc.) that can be a difference-maker for a community.

The following is a matrix of municipal roles adapted from the City of Red Deer's Social Policy Framework (City of Red Deer, 2015). The City of New Westminster can identify and utilize any number of municipal roles to build youth resilience through the recommendations provided.

Convening	Bringing people and organizations together to explore, strategize, and work through opportunities and challenges.
Capacity Building	Supporting groups and organizations to amplify strengths that generate positive results.
Educating	Communicating, supporting, and developing knowledge, understanding, and awareness.
Advocating	Influencing and informing decisions and policy through organized efforts.
Planning/Regulating	Using plans, policies, and regulations to affect positive community actions that contribute to positive results.
Investing	Contributing, maximizing, and leveraging resources to support actions.
Coordinating	Providing direct support to groups and organizations to enhance focus, productivity, and results.
Monitoring/Researching	Supporting evidence-based assessments, data collection, and analysis to inform design and evaluation.
Service Delivery	Providing facilities, supports, services, and programs to meet current and emerging needs in the community.
Partnering	Working with other levels of government and community organizations leverages strengths and builds common purpose.
Leading by Example	Influencing community change and improvement by leading the way through policy making, good governance, and being a positive presence in the community.

In some instances, the municipality may be best positioned to convene key stakeholders, build capacity across the community, or provide education and coordination where necessary. To structure the strategies from the document, suggested matching roles have been provided. As the City moves the strategy forward, other opportunities may arise that would require identifying a matching role. To do so, a simple matrix could be followed that includes defining the roles based on a series of guiding questions such as:

What is the nature and urgency of the challenge, and who is currently addressing it?

Purpose: Helps determine if the City needs to take a lead, supportive, or advocacy role.
Example: If youth mental health supports are urgently lacking and no other agency is leading, the City might consider a convening or coordinating role.

What municipal levers (e.g. policy, land use, programs, partnerships, advocacy) are best suited to impact this need?

Purpose: Maps available tools to the issue and guides appropriate action.
Example: For youth housing insecurity, the City might explore land use regulations or incentivize non-profits through affordable housing strategies.

What level of influence, capacity, and resources does the City have to respond effectively to this issue?

Purpose: Grounds decision-making in feasibility and impact.
Example: If internal staffing or budget is limited, the City might choose a facilitative role—supporting others to lead—rather than building new municipal services.

How does this role align with the City's existing mandates, strategic priorities, and values?

Purpose: Ensures consistency, alignment, and sustainability of efforts.
Example: If the City has prioritized equity, belonging, and reconciliation, it might prioritize roles that advance Indigenous youth well-being or newcomer youth inclusion.

What are youth and community stakeholders asking for, and how do they see the City's role?

Purpose: Ensures actions are community-informed and build legitimacy.
Example: If youth ask the City to amplify their voices on safety issues, the City may play a strong advocacy and liaison role.

Following a structured and consistent approach to defining appropriate roles and responsibilities can help amplify the leadership of the City among stakeholders and the community and further amplify and drive success for New Westminster youth.
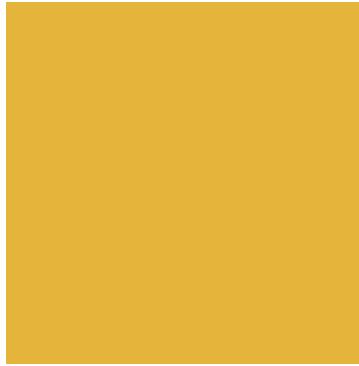
A Model for Collaboration

Youth resilience is not the responsibility of a single organization or sector—it is a collective outcome that depends on the strength, alignment, and responsiveness of an entire system. For New Westminster, supporting youth to thrive means enabling a coordinated, interdependent network of supports, where organizations are not just working alongside each other, but are connected through shared intention, trust, and structure.

To make this possible, New Westminster can adopt a two-part collaboration model developed by bassa Social Innovations through extensive work with small centre communities across Alberta. This model, outlined below, supports communities to build the right conditions for collaboration, and to define collaboration at the right level of depth for each context.

Together, these frameworks can help New Westminster shape a youth-serving system that is authentic, adaptive, and collectively impactful.

The Conditions for Collaboration

Before collaboration can thrive, the right conditions must be present. The model identifies four essential ingredients that must converge to create an environment where collaboration is possible and productive:

Need

Authentic collaboration emerges when there is a real and shared need that cannot be addressed by a single organization alone. In the youth sector, this might be rising mental health concerns, social isolation, or barriers to engagement and belonging. Identifying and surfacing these needs—particularly from youth themselves—ensures relevance and commitment.

Opportunity

Opportunities for collaboration must be accessible and inclusive. This means hosting forums, dialogues, and shared events that bring people together. However, opportunity alone is not enough—without trust or a sense of common purpose, it will not be acted upon. Municipal leadership plays a key role in catalyzing and legitimizing these opportunities.

Desire (Capacity + Permission)

Even when the need and opportunity are clear, organizations must have both the capacity (time, staff, resources) and the permission (internal and external) to collaborate. This includes funders and leadership encouraging collaboration as a valued outcome, not a competing priority.

Accountability

Collaboration must be grounded in a shared sense of accountability—to each other, to the community, and especially to youth. This means having shared goals, defined roles, and ongoing evaluation. Without accountability, efforts may lack follow-through or clarity.
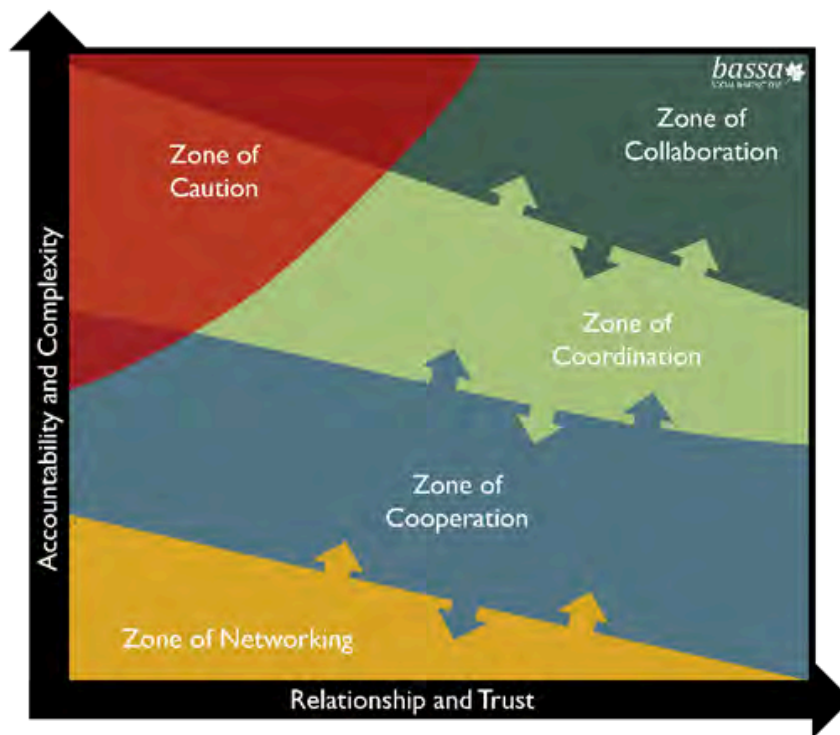
Zones of Collaboration

Once the conditions are in place, the Zones of Collaboration model offers a structured lens to define the appropriate level of collaboration based on two dimensions:

- Trust and Relationship
- Complexity and Accountability

This helps the City and its partners match the depth of collaboration to the challenge at hand, avoiding the pitfall of over-formalizing simple initiatives or under-preparing for complex ones.

Providing a consistent model of collaboration can help create clarity of expectations between stakeholders and the City regarding how and when collaboration is applied, and to what extent. Clear expectations and consistent approaches can lead to increased trust and impact across the spectrum of youth service providers across the community.

Networking	**Definition:** Informal relationship building **Best Use:** Onboarding, awareness, trust development
Cooperation	**Definition:** Purpose-driven but informal collaboration **Best Use:** Joint communications or events
Coordination	**Definition:** Structured alignment and shared timelines **Best Use:** Shared strategies or referral processes
Collaboration	**Definition:** Formal partnership with shared governance and resources **Best Use:** Complex, systemic initiatives like collective impact
Zone of Caution	**Definition:** Misalignment between trust and complexity **Best Use:** Red flag indicating the need to build trust or reduce complexity

Appendix G
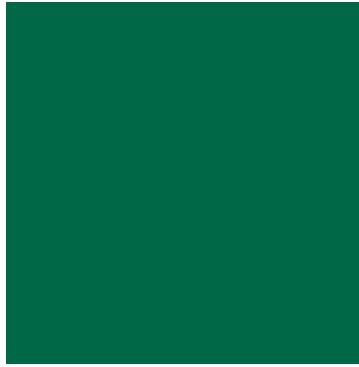
The Strategy:
A Whole-Community Approach

To activate the framework, there are four key strategic pillars to guide the City of New Westminster's next steps. These pillars were shaped by community voices, youth input, and sector expertise. They reflect the City's intentional shift toward proactively creating opportunities for youth to thrive. Each pillar outlines strategic priorities with recommended actions to consider.

P1 — **EMPOWERING YOUTH LEADERSHIP**
Transform the role of youth in New Westminster by supporting their power to shape, influence, and thrive in their communities.

P2 — **TRUSTED ADULTS AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS**
Ensure youth have ongoing access to safe, trusted adults in both formal and informal settings.

P3 — **YOUTH ACCESS TO PROGRAMS, SUPPORTS, AND SERVICES**
Foster protective factors through accessible, meaningful programs and services that build resilience.

P4 — **COORDINATED SYSTEMS FOR SAFETY AND INTERVENTION**
Build a responsive, integrated system that enhances youth safety through cross-sectoral collaboration.

NEW WESTMINSTER

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

P1

EMPOWERING YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Transform the role of youth in New Westminster by supporting their power to shape, influence, and thrive in their communities.

Seek Innovative and Informal Ways to Increase Youth Voice and Engagement Across Municipal Engagement Projects

Short Term

Key Actions:
Ensure that all municipal plans involve specific youth engagement strategies that lower barriers to participation for youth including language interpretation, going to where youth are (schools, youth centres, recreation facilities, etc.), and ensuring plain language that is easy to understand.

Municipal Roles:
Convening, Service Delivery, Leading by Example

Outcome:
Youth are regularly and meaningfully engaged in City decision-making through accessible, low-barrier engagement methods that reflect their diverse communication needs and lived realities.

Explore permanent opportunities to formalize civic leadership opportunities for youth.

Medium Term

Key Actions:
- Engage an internal City working group to identify immediate, medium, and long-term opportunities for youth civic leadership including committee opportunities or council type structures.

Municipal Roles:
Planning & Regulating, Capacity Building, Leading by Example

Outcome:
Youth have sustained, structured opportunities to lead and influence civic decisions through formal roles in committees, councils, and other leadership bodies.

NEW WESTMINSTER

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

P2

TRUSTED ADULTS AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Ensure youth have ongoing access to safe, trusted adults in both formal and informal settings.

Build Community Capacity Through Targeted Investment and Action

Short Term

Medium Term

Key Actions:
- Provide training in trauma-informed care, non-violent intervention, and culturally relevant mentoring for adults working with youth.
- Expand partnerships between schools, community organizations, and local service providers to ensure coordinated adult support networks.
- Train adults who interact with youth in non-violent intervention and bystander strategies to create safe, supportive environments.
- Offer ongoing professional development to adults working with youth to improve their capacity to address the unique needs of at-risk youth.
- Create mentorship opportunities for adults to build positive, trusting relationships with youth, particularly in school and community settings.

Municipal Roles:
Capacity Building, Education, Convening, Advocating

Outcome:
Adults in schools, organizations, and community settings are better equipped and more connected across sectors to support youth through coordinated, trauma-informed, and inclusive approaches.

Youth consistently experience safer, more supportive environments as a result of adult mentors trained in non-violent intervention, bystander response, and youth-centered relationship-building.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

P2

TRUSTED ADULTS AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Ensure youth have ongoing access to safe, trusted adults in both formal and informal settings.

Expand Access to and Use of Restorative Justice Practices

Medium Term
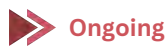
➤➤ **Ongoing**

Key Actions:
- Developing and expanding restorative justice programs that focus on safety and accountability, particularly for youth offenders.
- Utilizing community development models to create culturally informed restorative justice interventions.
- Offering restorative justice training for youth workers, educators, and community leaders to support their use of these practices.

Municipal Roles:
Capacity building, Convening, Coordinating, Advocacy

Outcome:
Youth who cause or experience harm are supported through culturally informed restorative processes that focus on healing, accountability, and strengthened community connections.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

P3

YOUTH ACCESS TO PROGRAMS, SUPPORTS, AND SERVICES

Foster protective factors through accessible, meaningful programs and services that build resilience.

Identify Barriers and Gaps Experienced by New Westminster Youth

Short Term

Key Actions:
- Engage youth and families to identify access barriers.
- Analyze participation trends and demographics.
- Ensure year-round access for all age groups.

Municipal Roles:
Monitoring & Researching, Partnering, Capacity Building, Convening

Outcome:
Programs and services are informed by current, localized data on youth needs and barriers, ensuring equitable participation across age groups and identities.

Reduce or Eliminate Barriers to Youth Access

Medium Term

Key Actions:
- Expand fee and transit assistance.
- Improve marketing and visibility of programs.
- Co-design outreach with youth to reduce stigma.

Municipal Roles:
Investing, Planning & Regulating, Service Delivery

Outcome:
Youth participation increases as financial, transportation, and stigma-related barriers are removed through inclusive policy, communication, and supports.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

P3 YOUTH ACCESS TO PROGRAMS, SUPPORTS, AND SERVICES

Foster protective factors through accessible, meaningful programs and services that build resilience.

Invest in Social and Recreation Prescription for Youth

Medium Term

Ongoing

Key Actions:
- Pilot prescription-based referrals to recreation, arts, and volunteering.
- Partner with schools and healthcare to implement the system.

Municipal Roles:
Convening, Coordinating, Education, Capacity Building

Outcome:
Youth are referred to supportive, non-clinical resources that build belonging and well-being, with stronger integration between recreation, health, and education.

Build Capacity for Program and Policy Design

Medium Term

Key Actions:
- Deliver targeted training for City and partner organization staff on GBA+ and IBPA frameworks.
- Integrate equity assessments into program design, evaluation, and funding processes to identify and address systemic exclusion.
- Create cross-sector communities of practice.

Municipal Roles:
Capacity Building, Education, Planning & Regulating

Outcome:
Service providers apply GBA+ and IBPA to design equitable and inclusive programs, resulting in more accessible, culturally relevant, and impactful youth services.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

P4

COORDINATED SYSTEMS FOR SAFETY AND INTERVENTION

Build a responsive, integrated system that enhances youth safety through cross-sectoral collaboration.

Explore and position the Municipality to lead and convene systems-level coordination for the youth resilience strategy.

Medium Term

Key Actions:
- Form Youth Systems Leadership Team.
- Develop data/resource sharing protocols.
- Establish a centralized communication strategy.

Municipal Roles:
Convene, Capacity Building, Coordinating, Partnering, Planning/Regulating

Outcome:
Cross-sectoral partners collaborate strategically and share data to align youth resilience efforts, resulting in more coordinated services and better tracking of trend

Explore the formation of a short-term action committee to improve non-policing intervention systems for youth.

Short Term

Key Actions:
- Create a temporary multi-stakeholder group to design non-policing interventions.
- Ensure youth and service providers are part of design process.

Municipal Roles:
Convene, Coordinate, Advocating, Monitoring/Research

Outcome:
A clear, community-endorsed pathway for non-policing youth interventions is established, improving access to early supports and reducing reliance on enforcement.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

P4

COORDINATED SYSTEMS FOR SAFETY AND INTERVENTION

Build a responsive, integrated system that enhances youth safety through cross-sectoral collaboration.

Consider the establishment of a Youth Social Development position at the City of New Westminster

Short Term

Key Actions:
- Hire a staff member to lead youth social development.
- Coordinate youth-serving stakeholders.
- Facilitate meetings and promote best practices.

Municipal Roles:
Investing, Service Delivery, Coordinating, Capacity Building

Outcome:
The City strengthens its leadership in youth resilience by sustaining a dedicated staff role that builds sector capacity, connects stakeholders, and drives implementation.

Detailed Strategic Pillars

P1

PILLAR 1: EMPOWERING YOUTH LEADERSHIP
Transform the role of youth in New Westminster by supporting their power to shape, influence, and thrive in their communities.

Youth in New Westminster have a desire to be more involved in the decisions that affect them most through both formal and informal means. Youth who participated in this project enjoyed having their voices heard in a way that has shaped the final document and have a desire for more. This should include youth at the margins and most at-risk of participating in negative behaviors. The City of New Westminster has a unique position and function to provide the informal and formal means for youth to be involved, and to share the impacts of youth participation to the community in a way that raises the profile of youth among residents.

Strategic Priority 1: Seek Innovative and Informal Ways to Increase Youth Voice and Engagement Across Municipal Projects.

The City of New Westminster has a legislated mandate to develop strategic plans and guiding documents through the British Columbia Local Government Act. Many of these documents and strategies involve community and resident engagement and youth want to have their voices heard. By using innovative and informal means to engage with youth, the municipality can empower youth and build trust.

Recommended Actions Include:

- Ensure that all municipal plans involve specific youth engagement strategies that lower barriers to participation for youth including language interpretation, going to where youth are (schools, youth centres, recreation facilities, etc.), and ensuring plain language that is easy to understand.
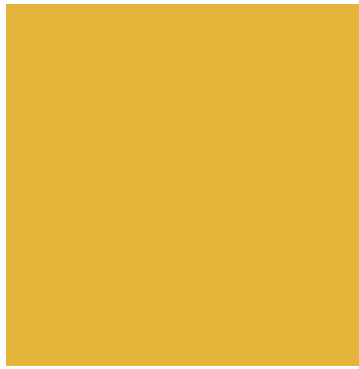
Strategic Priority 2: Explore long-term opportunities to formalize civic leadership opportunities for youth.

To maximize the long-term empowerment of youth across the City of New Westminster, it could be highly impactful to create formal civic leadership opportunities for youth. Many communities utilize formalized youth council structures or involve youth in municipal committees such as community safety committees, planning commissions, policing committees, among others. Creating sustainable and successful youth leadership opportunities often takes time and as such should be strategic in nature and have a long-term commitment behind them.

Recommended Actions Include:

- Engage an internal City working group to identify immediate, medium, and long-term opportunities for youth civic leadership including committee opportunities or council type structures.

P2

TRUSTED ADULTS AND POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Ensure youth have ongoing access to safe, trusted adults in both formal and informal settings.

Positive relationships with trusted adults are critical protective factors in youth development (Sieving et al., 2017). These relationships provide emotional support, guidance, and a sense of belonging, which can deter engagement in socially non-conforming behaviours. Building connections with trusted adults supports positive youth development and reduces vulnerabilities.

Strategic Priority 3: Build Community Capacity Through Targeted Investment and Action.

Strengthening the network of trusted adults around youth requires intentional investment in people, programs, and practices. By supporting adults who work with youth—both formally and informally—communities can foster safer, more inclusive environments that promote belonging, trust, and resilience. Evidence-based training in trauma-informed care, non-violent intervention, and culturally relevant mentoring enhances adults' capacity to engage youth effectively and compassionately.

Recommended actions include:

- Providing training in trauma-informed care, non-violent intervention, and culturally relevant mentoring for adults working with youth.
- Creating opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making processes, such as having youth involved in guiding strategic decisions through situation tables.
- Expanding partnerships between schools, community organizations, and local service providers to ensure coordinated adult support networks.

Strategic Priority 3 (continued): Invest in Training for Trusted Adults.

Trusted adults, including teachers, youth leaders, mentors, and community members, play a crucial role in ensuring youth feel supported. To maximize their impact, these adults must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to engage youth in a safe and effective manner. Comprehensive training in non-violent intervention, bystander training, and trauma-informed care helps these adults provide the emotional and practical support youth need to thrive.

Recommended actions include:

- Training adults who interact with youth in non-violent intervention and bystander strategies to create safe, supportive environments.
- Offering ongoing professional development to adults working with youth to improve their capacity to address the unique needs of at-risk youth.
- Creating mentorship opportunities for adults to build positive, trusting relationships with youth, particularly in school and community settings.

Strategic Priority 4: Expand Access to and Use of Restorative Justice Practices.

Restorative justice offers an alternative approach to addressing youth offences by focusing on repairing harm, fostering accountability, and restoring relationships. It is a model that supports youth offenders by emphasizing empathy, understanding, and community-based accountability. Expanding the use of restorative justice practices allows for a more holistic and youth-centered approach to community safety and intervention.

Recommended actions include:

- Developing and expanding restorative justice programs that focus on safety and accountability, particularly for youth offenders.
- Utilizing community development models, such as the Good Lives Model (Ward & Durrant, 2021), to create culturally informed restorative justice interventions (Barmaki, 2021).
- Offering restorative justice training for youth workers, educators, and community leaders to support their use of these practices in schools, community centers, and public spaces.
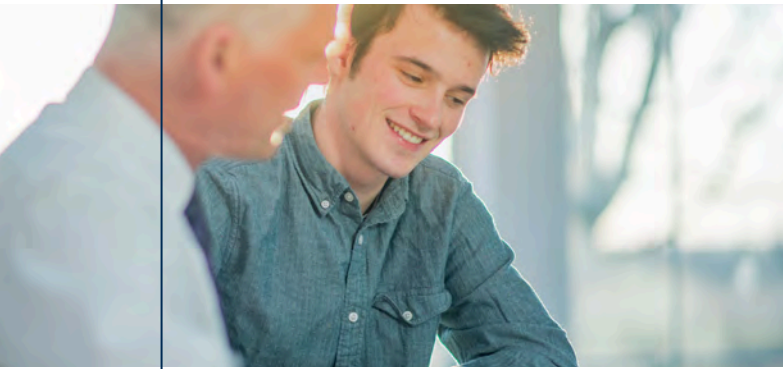
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YOUTH ACCESS TO PROGRAMS, SUPPORTS, AND SERVICES

P3

Foster protective factors through accessible, meaningful programs and services that build resilience.

Access is foundational to equity. This pillar focuses on reducing barriers that prevent youth from engaging in programs and services that support their development, safety, and well-being. Recommendations emphasize youth voice, affordability, accessibility, and outreach—ensuring that every young person in New Westminster can participate fully, regardless of their background or circumstances.

Strategic Priority 5: Identify Barriers and Gaps Experienced by New Westminster Youth.

Youth engagement is essential to identify barriers that prevent participation in leisure programs. In this study, youth referenced financial, time, and transportation constraints; however, further work should focus on understanding these challenges more deeply—especially for marginalized youth. This process can also uncover programming gaps to ensure no age group or time period is underserved. Programs should be available year-round, particularly during high-risk times like summer and after school. Underserved age groups—such as preteens (10–12) and older youth (19–25)—require tailored opportunities that reflect their developmental needs.

Recommended actions include:

- Collect specific barrier-related data through engagement with youth and families.
- Review participation trends and identify underserved populations using geographical and demographic analysis.

Strategic Priority 6: Reduce or Eliminate Barriers to Youth Access.

Reducing barriers to programming gives youth access to enriching activities that support skill development, build relationships, and promote personal growth. Structured opportunities—such as sports, arts, and community events—foster belonging and reduce the appeal of socially non-conforming behaviours (Tewelde & Olawoye, 2013). Programs must be inclusive, culturally relevant, and responsive to the diverse needs of youth, particularly those facing systemic barriers related to race, gender, age, or socio-economic status etc. (Son, 2018).

Partnerships between schools, community centers, youth leaders, and local organizations can expand reach and availability. By offering safe, constructive alternatives, these efforts help youth build resilience, improve self-esteem, and establish healthy peer networks. While youth voices should guide the development by identifying barriers and preferences, below are evidence-based strategies the City could explore, following consultation with appropriate collaborators.

Recommended actions include:

- Invest in fee assistance, transportation assistance, and marketing of programming. *(Each provided in more detail below.)*

Fee Assistance
While the City's Parks and Recreation Financial Assistance Program is a strong initiative, it may still carry systemic barriers. Many fee assistance programs (FAPs) are limited by challenges such as low visibility, burdensome applications, pre-payment requirements, income proof, or only partial coverage of program costs (Fortune & Oncescu, 2024).

Alternative models—developed in collaboration with youth and service providers—could include:
- A blanket policy of free access for all youth
- A tiered "pay what you can" model
- Annual recreation credits (e.g., $200–$500 per youth)

These could be linked with recreation and social prescription programs (see below) to streamline access and reduce stigma.

Transportation Assistance

Transportation is a key access barrier, particularly in areas with limited transit or for youth without drivers at home. Providing free or subsidized transit passes, shuttles, or ride-share options can significantly expand access to programming (Sullivan, 2017).

Approaches could include:
- Monthly transit budgets per youth
- Blanket "free transit for youth" policies through partnerships with local providers
- Community-based transport options, particularly for areas like Queensborough, where long travel times can discourage participation

Marketing of Existing Programming

Despite New Westminster's many youth-serving organizations, participants in this study identified gaps in usage and awareness. Broader research confirms that many programs are underused due to lack of targeted outreach (Oncescu et al., 2024).

One example in New Westminster is the Peer Assisted Care Team (PACT), which could benefit from increased marketing. Awareness that PACT operates during evenings and weekends could improve access to critical services when other supports are unavailable. Promoting this via social media, schools, and community events can ensure more youth and families know support is available during high-risk periods.

Another major barrier is the stigma youth face when seeking help (Oncescu et al., 2024). Co-developing youth-friendly marketing with organizations like PACT and the Youth Hub can help reframe assistance programs in ways that feel empowering and judgement-free. Effective branding and messaging reduce shame and normalize help-seeking.

Strategic Priority 7: Invest in Social and Recreation Prescription for Youth.

Social and recreation prescriptions involve connecting individuals with non-medical supports to enhance well-being (Müller-Riemenschneider et al., 2018). While this model is already used with seniors, its application for youth is still emerging—yet early adopters show it to be a promising and innovative approach, supported by strong evidence on the benefits of recreation for young people.

Prescriptions might refer youth to:
- Recreation programs
- Arts and creative workshops
- Volunteer roles or clubs aligned with their interests

This approach fosters belonging, introduces youth to positive adult mentors, and reduces social isolation—undermining the appeal of gang affiliation. Recreation prescription programs could be school-based or community-driven and should be designed in coordination with fee assistance efforts to eliminate financial barriers.

Recommended actions include:

- Piloting a youth-focused recreation prescription initiative through partnerships with local health providers, the school district, and youth-serving organizations to support youth access.

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Strategic Priority 8: Build Capacity for Program and Policy Design.

Investing in provider training ensures that youth programs and policies are inclusive, accessible, and equity-informed. Applying frameworks like GBA+ (Gender-Based Analysis Plus) and IBPA (Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis) enables service providers and municipal partners to assess and redesign offerings to meet the needs of youth with diverse and intersecting identities—across age, gender, race, ability, and socio-economic background.

Recommended actions include:

- Deliver targeted training for City and partner organization staff on GBA+ and IBPA frameworks as they apply to youth programming and policy-making.
- Integrate equity assessments into program design, evaluation, and funding processes to identify and address systemic exclusion.
- Create cross-sector communities of practice to share case studies, lessons learned, and emerging best practices for inclusive and accessible youth services.
- Embed inclusive design protocols in service contracts and partnership agreements to ensure accountability across the youth-serving ecosystem.

P4

COORDINATED SYSTEMS FOR SAFETY AND INTERVENTION

Build a responsive, integrated system that enhances youth safety through cross-sectoral collaboration.

At the core, this strategy is all about enhancing what is already working and adding complimentary components to maximize impact for youth. There are three complimentary recommendations within this strategy.

Strategic Priority 9: Explore and position the Municipality to lead and convene systems level coordination for the youth resilience strategy.

Developing the Youth Resilience Strategy and the prior and ongoing actions from the Building Safer Communities Fund have helped to create momentum in the community among service providers, youth, and stakeholders to move in a coordinated and collaborative direction. To harness this momentum, the City of New Westminster is well positioned to convene and coordinate key stakeholders at a leadership level to move the strategy and actions forward. This goes beyond the existing situation table by bringing senior and systems level leaders from the municipality, School District 40, New West Police Department, along with local and regional service providers at regular intervals to coordinate strategies and actions at a strategic level.

Recommended actions include:

- Convene and form a Youth Systems Leadership Team with executive and senior level leaders from key stakeholders to review the Youth Resilience Strategy and identify opportunities and roles for members.
- Seek to develop local and regional data and resource sharing protocols to enhance the community use of data to track trends and evaluate progress.
- Consider the creation of a centralized communication protocol for the Youth Resilience Strategy to ensure consistency of communication.

Strategic Priority 10: Explore the formation of a short-term action committee to improve non-policing intervention systems for youth.

Youth and stakeholders identified a gap in intervention level supports for youth that bridge between prevention efforts and enforcement actions. To ensure that resulting non-policing interventions are supported by youth, the community, and stakeholders, it is recommended to enact a short-term action committee with key stakeholders from the City of New Westminster, School District 40, New West Police Department, Youth Justice, youth, and service providers to identify a clear pathway forward.

Strategic Priority 11: Consider the establishment of a Youth Social Development position at the City of New Westminster.

As many of the strategies and actions from this document include the combination of multiple municipal roles, adding capacity for youth social development can be an important asset and step forward to increasing youth resilience in the community. The recommended purpose of this position is to operate at strategic level to convene, coordinate, and build capacity among the youth serving sector and stakeholders through the exchange of best practice, meeting facilitation, and other activities to ensure a consistent connection between the City and key stakeholders.

Evaluating the Strategy

Evaluation plays a critical role in measuring the effectiveness of community plans by ensuring that strategies lead to sustainable and meaningful outcomes (Harris, 2016). It provides actionable insights, supports accountability, and fosters community trust by demonstrating progress and identifying areas for improvement. A robust evaluation framework ensures that resiliency-building efforts adapt to the ever-evolving needs of the community and remain impactful over time.

In the context of community resiliency, evaluation assesses how well the plan strengthens the community's capacity to respond to and recover from challenges. For the City of New Westminster, evaluation will serve as a tool to measure progress, celebrate successes, and inform future actions that align with the vision of a resilient, inclusive, and safe environment for youth. It ensures that the Youth Resilience Strategy is not static but evolves to address changing conditions while maintaining alignment with the voices and aspirations of youth and stakeholders.

Evaluation Recommendations

Host an Annual Youth Resiliency Summit

The City should organize an annual Youth Resiliency Summit to bring together youth representatives, service providers, stakeholders, and families.

Purpose:
1. Provide a platform for annual reviews of the Youth Resilience Strategy's progress.
2. Allow youth and stakeholders to share feedback and identify new priorities.
3. Strengthen community connections and foster collaboration.

Format:
1. Present updates on measurable outcomes and key successes from the strategy.
2. Host interactive workshops, panel discussions, and youth-led sessions to highlight lived experiences and solutions.
3. Facilitate networking opportunities to build partnerships across sectors.

Suggested Measurable Outcomes:
1. Increased community ownership of the strategy's progress.
2. Enhanced collaboration among youth, families, and stakeholders.
3. Ongoing alignment of strategy goals with community needs.

Invest in Third-Party Evaluation

To ensure unbiased and evidence-based assessment of the strategy, the City could:

1. Engage a third-party evaluator to guide the implementation process and collect data on the strategy's effectiveness.
2. Provide an objective analysis of the outcomes and identify areas for improvement.
3. Offer accountability to funders, stakeholders, and the community.

By taking these actions, the City of New Westminster can lay a strong foundation for the Youth Resilience Strategy's success, demonstrating its commitment to creating a safer, more inclusive, and thriving community for its youth.

As a starting point, the following table of outcomes and indicators can serve as an evaluation framework from which to build a more robust evaluation if a third-party evaluator is hired. In the meantime, it can help guide City administration and staff to begin an evaluation process.

Outcome	Indicators	Recommended Frequency of Evaluation
Increased Safety in Schools and Public Spaces	- Percentage of youth reporting a high level of safety in schools (via annual surveys). - Number of reported incidents of bullying or harassment in schools and public spaces. - Presence of trained adults in public spaces (e.g., youth hubs, transit areas).	Annual evaluations; quarterly progress updates.
Enhanced Access to Programs and Services	- Percentage of youth aware of local youth programs and services (via surveys or focus groups). - Participation rates in youth programs and services. - Reduction in wait times for mental health and counseling services.	Semi-annual evaluations; annual reporting.
Strengthened Positive Adult Connections	- Percentage of youth reporting having at least three trusted adults in their lives. - Number of youth involved in mentorship or leadership programs. - Retention rates of youth workers and service providers to ensure consistent relationships.	Annual evaluations; semi-annual progress checks.

Outcome	Indicators	Recommended Frequency of Evaluation
Reduced Youth Vulnerability to Violence and Gang Involvement	• Percentage of youth reporting being approached for gang involvement or unsafe activities. • Number of youth referred to diversion programs or intervention services. • Crime data trends related to youth-involved violent offenses.	Annual evaluations; monthly crime trend monitoring.
Increased Youth Engagement and Empowerment	• Number of youth participating in leadership or civic engagement programs. • Percentage of youth reporting a sense of community belonging and influence. • Number of youth-led initiatives implemented within the community.	Annual evaluations; semi-annual reporting on youth initiatives.
Increased Inter-Agency Collaboration	• Establishment of a formalized framework for inter-agency coordination. • Frequency of cross-sectoral meetings and collaborative initiatives. • Stakeholder satisfaction with the effectiveness of collaborative efforts.	Semi-annual evaluations; annual stakeholder satisfaction survey.
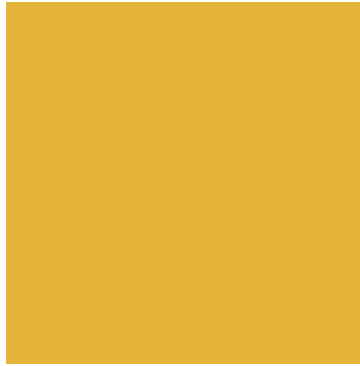
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Appendix A – Detailed Engagement Summary

Engaging Youth and the Community

Community and stakeholder engagement is critical for any project that seeks to develop youth resiliency. As such, this project took a mixed method approach to community and stakeholder engagement at every phase of the project to ensure youth and community had their voice heard.

Figure A1

Phases of the mixed methods approach used in this project

Phase 1 - Scoping and Discovery

- Engaging the City and key stakeholders to identify early trends, opportunities, and key questions.

Phase 2 - Community Understanding

- Engaging with community stakeholders and youth to answer key questions and build community understanding.

Phase 3 - Strategic Community Design

- Working with community stakeholders, youth, and their families to co-create strategies and actions.

Phase 4 - Validation and Reporting

- Surveying youth and connecting with stakeholders to validate strategies and build momentum.

Scoping and Discovery

The first step in the engagement process involved internal meetings with City staff and project sponsors. These discussions helped set the scope and direction of the Youth Resilience Strategy including framing a vision and framework for the project.

Following meetings with the City of New Westminster a series of key informant focus groups were held including individuals from youth services, probation, School District No. 40, the City of New Westminster, and New Westminster Police Department members. The interviews provided a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by youth in the city. Questions were focused on gaining an early understanding of the perceived safety related challenges that New West youth face in their lives. Additionally, participants provided

insight into how to best engage youth in this project and helped generate a preliminary list of stakeholders to engage in the project.

Focus groups suggested several key themes related to youth safety and community connection. Participants perceived a rising concern about youth violence, both online and in public spaces, noting that conflicts appeared to escalate quickly to physical altercations without intermediate steps for resolution. Social media platforms were mentioned as both positive and negative influences, with some participants suggesting they contributed to increased bullying and disassociation among youth. There was a perception that many young people felt unsafe in public areas, particularly on transit systems after dark, and in "hot spots". Participants also observed a sense of disconnection for some youth, especially among marginalized groups, including gender diverse, racialized, and economically disadvantaged individuals, which they believed could make these youth more vulnerable to gang recruitment and violence.

These key insights helped frame future data analysis as well as informed key questions that were posed to youth and community stakeholders in the community understanding phase.

Community Understanding: Connecting with Youth & Service Providers

The second phase of this project included both direct youth engagement and workshops with services providers across the community of New Westminster.

Figure A2

Photograph of Youth Poster Feedback on What Helps Youth Feel Safe in New Westminster
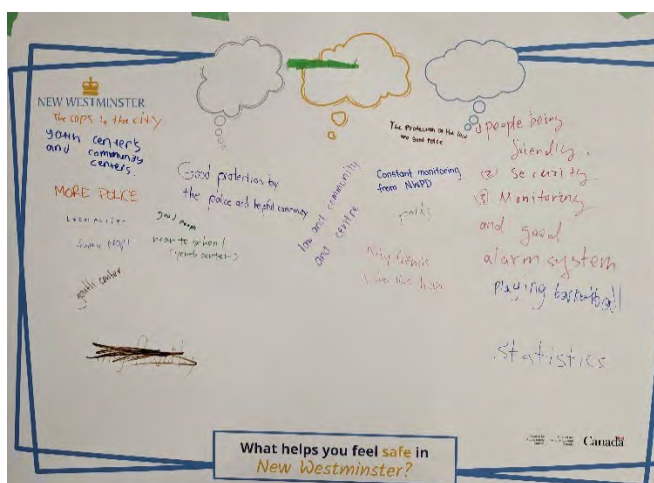
Engagement activities directly with youth were conducted at the New Westminster High School through direct one to one conversations assisted by youth staff at the school. Informal conversations and focus groups were also held with youth at the Purpose Society Youth HUB. Additionally, youth were engaged creatively during youth week in May of 2024 at the New West Youth Centre. Youth were invited to share their thoughts and experiences through a poster session. This creative engagement was aimed at capturing their thoughts on community safety and resilience.

Youth shared their own experiences of community safety and highlighted many great assets in the community including the youth centre, recreation facilities, and the positive and supportive adults in their lives that help them. Youth also shared their experiences of feeling vulnerable or unsafe in some spaces they frequent including schools, skytrain stations and some public areas.

Figure A3

Photographs from Youth Poster Feedback Sessions

An additional engagement session was held with students from Ecole Glenbrook Middle School which focused on deepening the understanding of what youth experience while growing up in New Westminster.

Figure A4

Photograph of Youth Poster Session on 'What's it Like Growing up in New Westminster'?

Youth were invited to write and discuss their experiences growing up in New Westminster. They shared a range of feedback that included positive assets such as supportive community members, nice places to shop, and the available recreation options. They also shared some experiences where they experienced or witnessed acts of bullying, along with times where they felt unsafe in the community.

Engaging Service Providers

To engage with community service providers, they were invited to a service provider workshop that involved several activities that helped identify current trends in youth safety, community assets that support youth, and provided key insights into the network of service providers available to youth in the community. Service providers who attended the session focused on mapping the historical challenges and assets in the community, while also imagining a future of improved youth support.

Figure A5

Photograph of Timeline Activity with Service Providers
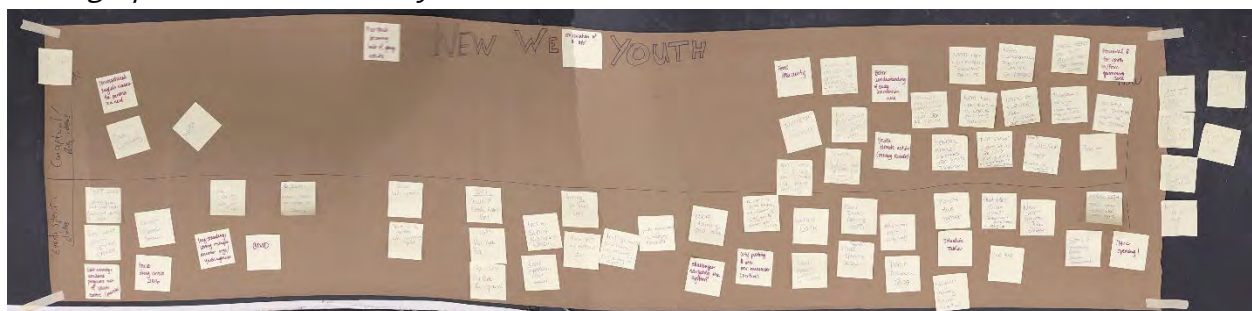
The timeline exercise helped create a visual representation of how the network of youth supportive programs have grown in the community over the years, helping to highlight that

New Westminster has a younger youth service providing sector, which means there is an opportunity to build it up in a continued collaborative manner.

Additionally, participants created an asset map of existing youth supports in the community that highlighted a significant volume of resources. When asked to sort the existing assets into age target categories participants recognized there is an abundance of resources for youth aged 15 to 19 and that youth between 19 and 24 have fewer specific services available to them. Additionally, there was a noted opportunity for further preventative programming for youth aged 11 to 14 specific to their needs (Table A1).

Table A1

Asset Map of Existing Youth Supports

11-14	15-19	19+
Summer Camps City youth Services in Middle Schools Youth Drop-In After School Situation Table Youth Week Free Events Wellness Centre Schools EA's and youth workers PAC BC Kids Sports Grants	Dan's Legacy Youth Week Life Guard Programs Youth Clinic High School Sports Leadership Groups Community Service projects New West Youth Centre Youth HUB Firefighter Program Alternate School Welcome Centre Music Scene Schools Youth Drop In Youth Support Groups	Douglas College PRCC Filipino Community New West Youth HUB Aunt Leah's
Assets Shared by All Youth		
Welcome Centre Youth Drop In Friendship Circles Queens Park Arena Skate Park Farmer's Market Compassionate community NWPD municipal force Skatepark and outdoor basketball court Gymnasiums and sports teams Festivals Parent Groups Indigenous cultural engagement in schools City community programs, centers, sports	Wading pool Building community is a priority for City Arts council Small but mighty city Recovery days Public Library Sanctuary City Friday's on Front Church programs Private sports leagues Bike and Scooter Lanes Supportive City Council	

Social Media Food Programs	

As a final exercise, participants engaged in a Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR) analysis to begin exploring potential future states for youth and service provision in the future.

Figure A6

SOAR Analysis of Potential Future States for Youth and Service Provision

Strengths
- New Westminster has a strong foundation of programs and facilities supporting youth, including sports, youth hubs, and low-barrier opportunities. The community benefits from partnerships with agencies and youth advisory committees, ensuring young voices are heard. A key strength is the accessibility of free or low-cost programs that reduce barriers for participation. As noted, "All middle schools have programming," highlighting the inclusivity and widespread reach of services.

Opportunities
- There are significant opportunities to enhance collaboration between agencies and stakeholders, particularly to meet the needs of aging-out youth and pre-teens/tweens. Suggestions include "more opportunities to meet the needs of multilingual families" and expanding trauma-informed counseling. Programs that foster youth leadership and vocational training are key areas of focus, along with hosting more "city advisory meetings outside of school" to engage the broader community.

Aspirations
- The community aspires to create more inclusive and accessible programming, such as "youth mentorship programs" and expanded mental health resources. Sustainable funding and better-trained staff with higher wages are seen as essential to maintaining program quality. A strong emphasis is placed on creating dedicated, safe spaces where youth feel connected and supported, with aspirations for "proactive and responsive trauma counseling" to address mental health needs.

Results
- The envisioned outcomes include no youth experiencing homelessness or hunger and all youth having access to "three caring adults" for guidance and support. Programs would be accessible outside regular hours, ensuring no one is left behind. Ultimately, the goal is to foster a thriving community where "youth have basic needs met" and are empowered to lead, engage, and contribute to a resilient and connected future.

The engagement with youth and service providers in New Westminster has been a critical step in shaping a comprehensive understanding of youth safety, resilience, and the resources they rely on. Through direct youth engagement at schools, the Purpose Society

Youth HUB, and creative activities during Youth Week, young people shared both their appreciation for community assets—like recreation facilities, supportive adults, and youth centers—and their concerns about feeling vulnerable in spaces such as schools, transit stations, and public areas. These insights have informed further engagement efforts, including the youth survey, ensuring that youth voices remain central to this initiative.

Similarly, the service provider workshops highlighted the strengths of New Westminster's youth services while identifying areas for growth. The timeline exercise illuminated how youth-supportive programs have evolved, with participants noting the unique opportunity to strengthen this relatively young service network. Asset mapping revealed a wealth of resources for youth aged 15 to 19 but highlighted gaps for those aged 11 to 14 and 19 to 24. The SOAR analysis further reinforced the value of collaboration, aspirations for accessible and inclusive programming, and the goal of ensuring that all youth in New Westminster can thrive. Together, these findings provide a strong foundation for advancing youth resilience strategies in the community.

Strategic Community Design

The third phase of community engagement focused on the community design phase where stakeholders and community members participate fully in defining actions and strategies that can improve the lives of youth by building greater resilience. In this phase, youth and their families, along with service providers, were engaged in facilitated co-design processes.

Youth and their families participated in an evening design lab at the təəməsew̓txʷ Aquatic and Community Centre which was open to all New Westminster families. Those who participated were invited to read all the feedback provided by youth and service providers throughout the project and share their ideas on how to improve the lives of youth in the community.

Figure A7

Photograph of Poster Session with Community on What Would Make Things Better
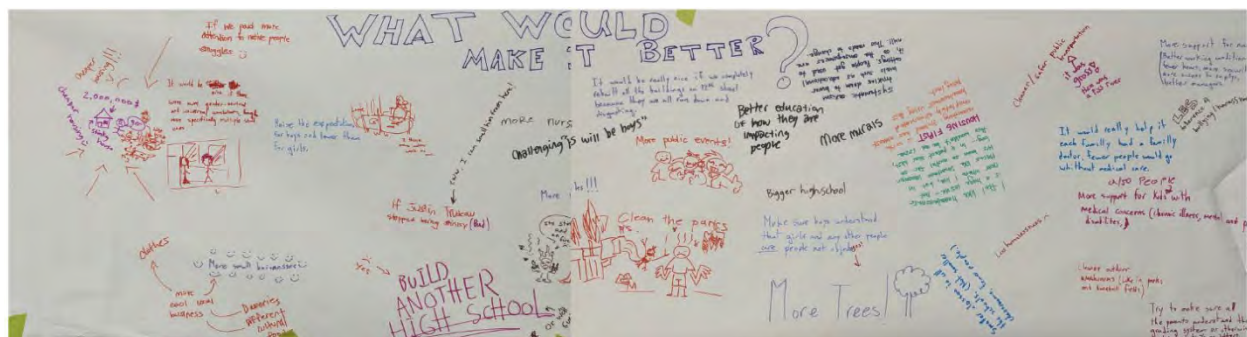
A wide range of comments and ideas were shared including building more infrastructure, improving parks, increasing health and safety resources, and challenging social norms that make youth lives difficult. Those who participated were thankful for the opportunity to engage, share their stories, be heard, and build towards a positive future.

Two design labs were hosted for service providers, with participants collaborating to design interventions for youth. The service provider design labs revealed key themes about the current challenges youth in New Westminster face, alongside actionable insights for improvement. Participants expressed concerns about safety in public spaces such as schools, transit stations, and parks, citing issues like bullying, transphobia, and homelessness. There was also a strong emphasis on youth feeling disconnected from their communities and lacking positive, safe adult connections. One provider noted, "Adults are not seen or identified by youth as safe," highlighting a significant gap in mentorship and trust.

Youth employment surfaced as a critical issue, with barriers like immigration restrictions, high competition for entry-level jobs, and insufficient pre-employment programs contributing to poverty and homelessness among youth. Additionally, accessibility to resources remains a challenge, with long waitlists for essential services like mental health support and counseling. This is exacerbated by exclusionary service criteria, unstable funding practices, and high staff burnout, creating a fragmented system where youth struggle to access consistent, reliable help.

The "Current and Future State" exercise revealed a shared vision among providers for a more connected, inclusive, and supportive system for youth. Currently, youth experience barriers to accessing recreation, healthcare, employment, and pro-social activities due to financial constraints, transportation issues, and systemic inefficiencies. Providers described youth as feeling unsafe, isolated, and unsupported, with one commenting, "When a youth is ready for help, services have long wait-lists or the youth may not meet a mandate."

In the envisioned future state, providers aspire towards a community where all youth feel connected, safe, and supported by stable, well-funded services. This includes ensuring "immediate and efficient access" to youth workers, counseling, and mental health services, eliminating waitlists and exclusionary criteria. A strong emphasis was placed on building mentorship opportunities and fostering belonging through inclusive recreational spaces, cultural programming, and community activities. The ideal future envisions a cohesive system where agencies collaborate seamlessly, youth-serving organizations coordinate efforts, and families are integrated into youth support strategies.

Emerging Insights and Opportunities

- Key opportunities emerged for targeted solutions, including:
- Expanding youth hubs and safe spaces with low-barrier access.
- Increasing funding stability to retain high-quality staff and reduce burnout.
- Developing culturally sensitive programs and mentorship initiatives for newcomers.
- Strengthening collaboration between service providers to streamline communication and resource-sharing.
- Addressing systemic barriers to employment through pre-employment programs and wage subsidies (e.g., the CUE model).

Validation and Reporting

Validation is vital for the Youth Resilience Strategy to ensure that youth held a final voice to ensure that the project heard them effectively and was moving forward with strategic priority areas that resonated with their experience. To validate the project's direction with New Westminster youth and community stakeholders, a mixed methods approach was leveraged to survey youth and engage directly with key stakeholders.

129 youth participated in the validation survey which when combined with other current resources such as the McCreary Adolescent Youth Survey from 2023 provides a statistically representative group of youth providing validation to the strategic priority areas. To validate with community stakeholders, one to one conversations were held with a wide range of stakeholders from across New Westminster and Queensborough including, but not limited to, service providers, School District No. 40 staff and administration, New Westminster Police Department and Gang Suppression Unit, City of New Westminster Youth Program Staff, and a youth advisory council from Aunt Leah's.

The following section highlights the community informed and validated strategic priorities for youth resiliency along with corresponding data from the validation survey and other available data sources to provide valuable context.

Appendix B – Detailed Priority Areas

Throughout the project community and youth engagement along with data analysis supported the emergence of four main strategic priority areas for youth resiliency in New Westminster:

Safety in Schools and Public Spaces	Personal Safety for Youth	Positive Adult Connections and Role Models	Increased Access to Programs and Services

These priority areas are explored in more detail below with validation context from the 2023 McCreary Centre Society Adolescent Health Survey (McCreary Centre Society, 2024), the 2022/23 Youth Development Instrument report for School District No. 40 (Samji et al., 2023), the 2022/23 Middle Years Development Instrument (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023), and the 2024 Youth Resiliency Strategy Validation Survey (City of New Westminster, 2024).

Safety in Schools and Public Spaces

When engaging with youth and hearing about their experiences there were several times youth felt like their safety in school, community spaces, and public spaces were not guaranteed. Youth sometimes felt they could be targeted for bullying, experience physical harm, or generally felt unease due to a range of factors outside of their control.
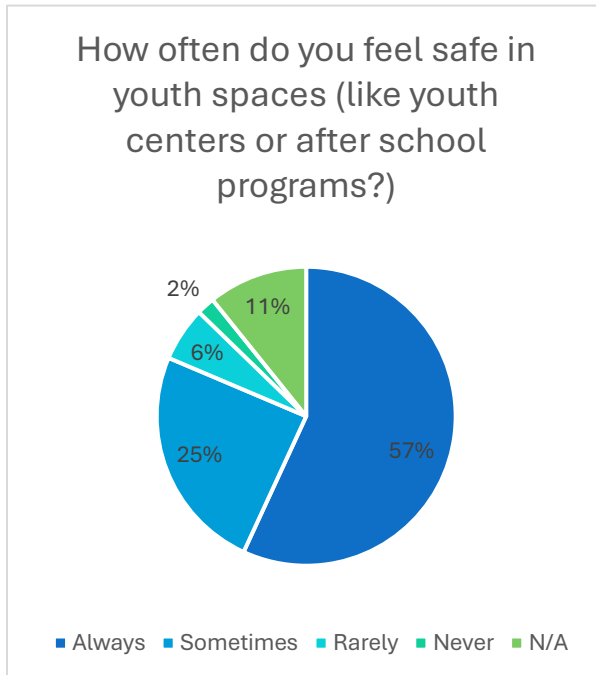
Youth in New Westminster identified several factors that contribute to their feelings of safety or insecurity. A major concern is the presence of people who are perceived as unsafe, such as individuals acting in aggressive, 'sketchy,' or threatening ways, including strangers, peers, or even adults in public spaces. One youth shared, "I feel unsafe because I am never aware of someone's intentions. Therefore, I am constantly checking my surroundings to ensure I don't get harmed." Harassment and bullying—ranging from teasing about appearance to racial discrimination—are significant issues, particularly in schools and youth programs. As one youth said, "I am scared to dress how I want because of people who make fun of me at school." Drug activity and homelessness near parks and public transit also contribute to feelings of unease, with one youth noting, "Too many drug [users] in New West and not enough cops doing stuff." Many reported that parks and school washrooms feel unsafe due to lack of supervision, poor maintenance, and inappropriate behavior, such as vaping and drug use. "School washrooms don't feel super safe... they don't have doors on the stalls sometimes," another youth explained.

Youth have been asked about their perceptions of safety in the school environment in multiple formats. In the project validation survey 46% of youth reported always feeling safe, 51% reported sometimes feeling safe, 2% reported rarely feeling safe, and 2% reported never feeling safe (City of New Westminster, 2024). In the 2023 Youth Development Instrument a different scale provided similar results. When asked if they felt safe at school, 49% reported a high sense of safety, 28% reported a medium sense of safety, and 23% reported low sense of safety (Samji et al., 2023). Additionally, in the 2023 Adolescent Health Survey, it was reported that 65% of youth that responded felt safe at school, which represents a 14% drop from 2013 and 9% drop from 2018 (McCreary Centre Society, 2024).
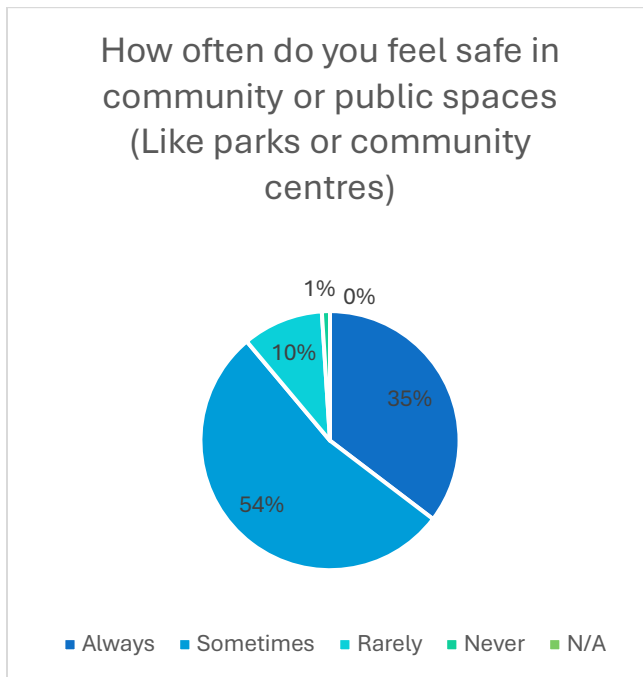
Figure B1

Validation Survey Results of Youth Perceptions of Safety in Youth Spaces

How often do you feel safe in youth spaces (like youth centers or after school programs?)

- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- N/A

Figure B2

Validation Survey Results of Youth Perceptions of Safety in Community and Public Spaces

How often do you feel safe in community or public spaces (Like parks or community centres)

- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- N/A

As youth also reported feeling unsafe in youth focused and public spaces, it was important to provide an opportunity for youth to qualify their experiences. In the validation survey, 57% of youth surveyed indicated always feeling safe in youth spaces, while 25% sometimes felt safe, 6% rarely felt safe, and 2% never felt safe. When asked about their sense of safety in public spaces, 35% of youth reported always feeling safe, 54% reported sometimes feeling safe, 10% reported rarely feeling safe, and 1% reported never feeling safe (City of New Westminster, 2024). As youth also reported feeling unsafe in youth focused and public spaces, it was important to provide an opportunity for youth to qualify their experiences. In the *bassa* validation survey, 57% of youth surveyed indicated always feeling safe in youth spaces, while 25% sometimes felt safe, 6% rarely felt safe, and 2% never felt safe (Figure B1). When asked about their sense of safety in public spaces, 35% of youth reported always feeling safe, 54% reported sometimes feeling safe, 10% reported rarely feeling safe, and 1% reported never feeling safe (City of New Westminster, 2024) (Figure B2).

When asked in the validation survey to provide additional context, youth emphasized the importance of trustworthy authority figures and improved security measures. They highlighted the need for quicker response times, more visible policing, and better oversight in public spaces and schools. "Lack of security and response timing" was specifically mentioned as a barrier to feeling safe.

Many expressed that having a supportive community or trusted adults makes them feel safer, along with being surrounded by friends or peers. One youth shared, "Knowing whom I associate myself with and knowing I have a community I can rely on keeps me feeling safe." However, they also stressed that safety requires action—such as addressing problematic behaviors in youth spaces and ensuring facilities are well-maintained and monitored. "Some of the people they let into youth programs are known around schools as horrible people that start fights and make everyone feel uncomfortable," one youth explained.

The concerns shared by youth around their safety in schools and community spaces along with survey data demonstrates that some youth are seeking increased safety from the environments they frequent. In the absence of this safety, some youth reported taking preventative action for themselves which is explored more in the next strategic priority, youth personal safety.
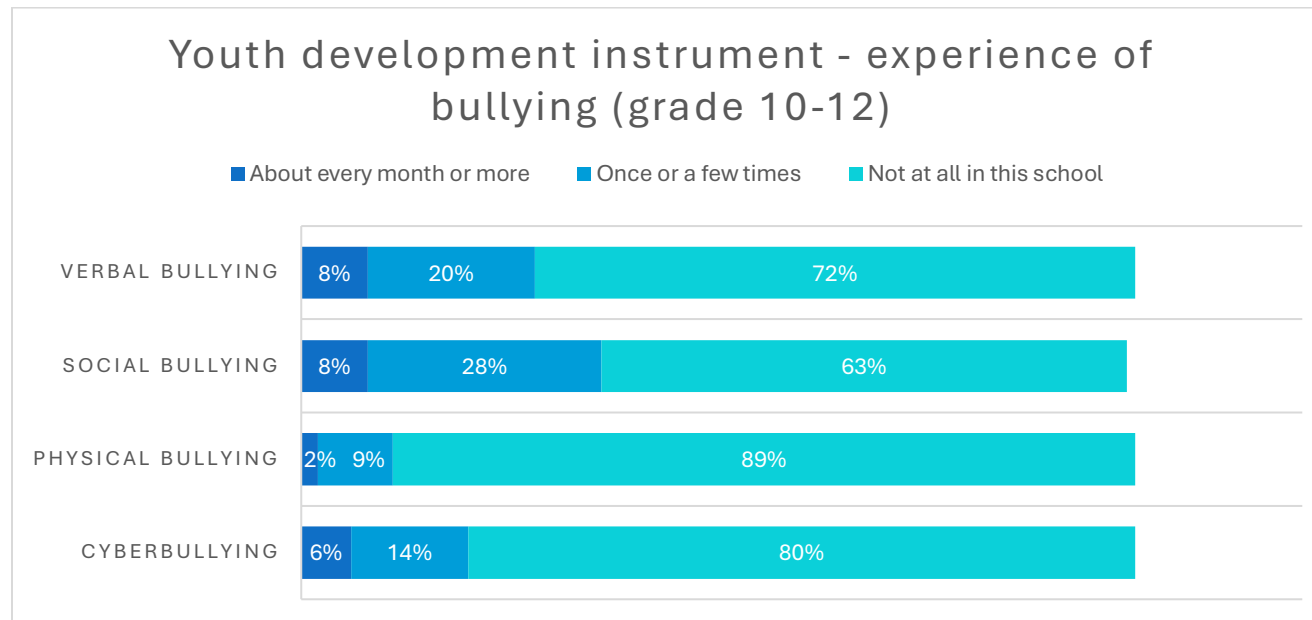
Personal Safety for Youth

The sense of feeling safe is a vital protective and developmental factor for youth. Youth who experience concerns for their safety that go unheard or unaddressed by adults in their lives can begin to make decisions that they feel protect themselves but can create more risk for greater harms in their lives (Centre for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.). Youth in New Westminster shared they can sometimes feel unsafe in the community and some common themes were heard that youth were taking actions such as carrying protection to keep themselves safe. This section explores the youth experience and feedback around the presence of bullying behaviors, personal safety risk factors, experiences of recruitment, and the extent to which youth may be trying to protect themselves by carrying a weapon.

The Middle Years and Youth Development Instrument surveys provide context to youth feedback as it relates to bullying type behavior (Figure B3).

Figure B3

Experiences of Bullying (Grades 10-12) (Source: Samji et al. 2023)

Youth development instrument - experience of bullying (grade 10-12)

■ About every month or more   ■ Once or a few times   ■ Not at all in this school

|		
VERBAL BULLYING	8%	20%	72%
SOCIAL BULLYING	8%	28%	63%
PHYSICAL BULLYING	2%	9%	89%
CYBERBULLYING	6%	14%	80%

Youth who participated in both the Youth Development Instrument (YDI) (see Figure B3) and Middle Years Development Instrument (MYDI) (see Figure B4) reported experiencing various forms of bullying. The most prevalent across both groups is social bullying (e.g. exclusion, gossip, etc.) and verbal bullying (e.g. being threatened or teased). Together, 36% of students in the YDI reported being socially bullied at least once in the year (Samji et al., 2023), and 45% of those in the MYDI reported the same (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023). 28% of YDI participants reported experiencing verbal bullying at least once in the year (Samji et al., 2023) and 53% of MYDI participants reported the same (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023). When compared to provincial norms, the experiences of New Westminster students were similar or slightly below provincial averages across all reported forms of bullying (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023; Samji et al., 2023).

Figure B4

Experiences of Bullying (Grade 8) *(Source: Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023)*
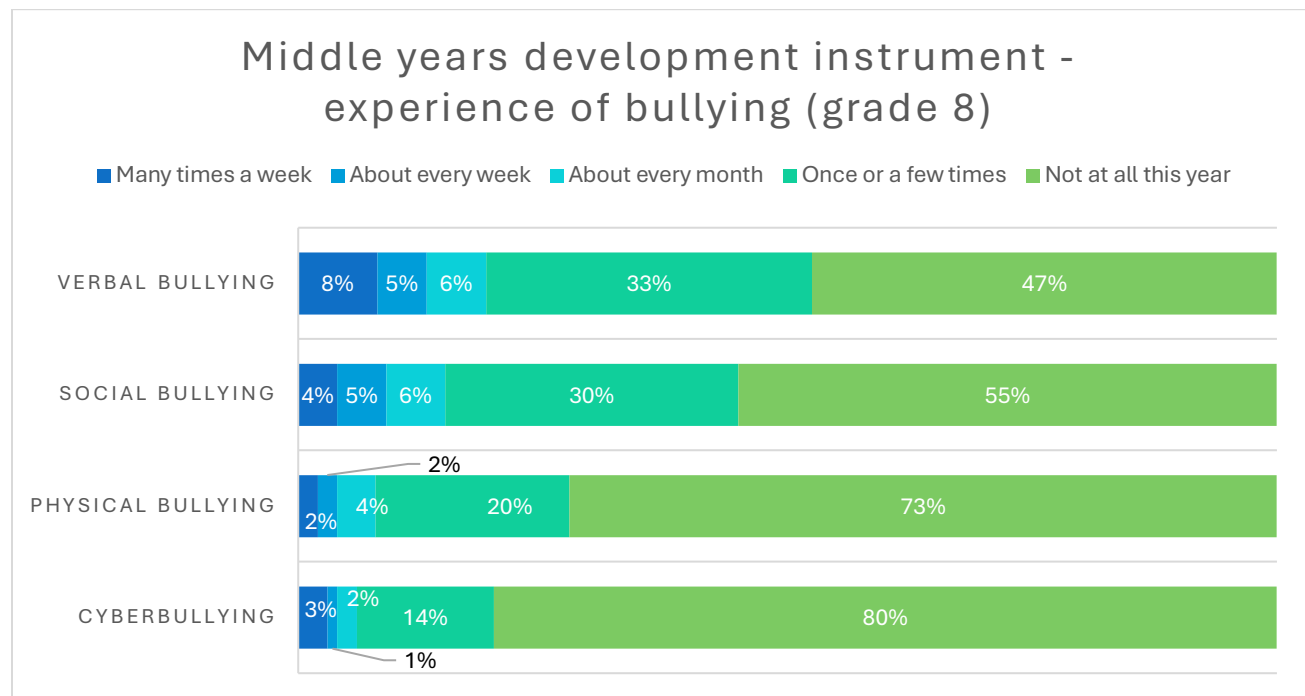
Table B1

Youth Perception of Source of Discrimination (Source: McCreary Centre Society, 2024)

Reasons youth perceived they had been discriminated against in the past 12 months	
Physical Appearance	22%
Race, ethnicity, or skin colour	17%
Weight	15%
Gender/sex	13%
Religion	6%
Sexual orientation	6%
How much money they/their family had	5%
Health condition	3%
Disability	3%

As an additional input to personal experiences of safety, the 2023 Adolescent Health Survey provides an important window into the presence of other adverse experiences in the lives of youth that can increase risk factors or lead to higher risk behaviors. Regarding sexual harassment, 25% of males and 45% of females reported verbal harassment and 15% of males and 26% of females reported physical harassment (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). Of importance, 14% of females reported experiencing physical abuse and 13% reported sexual abuse in their lifetimes. This is consistent with feedback heard from youth regarding feeling unsafe or experiencing being "catcalled" while in public.

When asked why youth may have felt discrimination in the past 12 months, the top 3 responses were physical appearance (22%), race, ethnicity, or skin colour (17%), and weight (15%) (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). Youth shared the most common places where they felt discrimination from peers or others were at school (22%), on social media (10%), or on the street (7%) (see Table 5). This also connects with what was heard from youth regarding experiences of discrimination or feeling unwelcome. When asked where youth may have experienced discrimination in the past 12 months, the top 3 responses were at school (22%), on social media/online (10%), and on the street (7%) (see Table 6).

Table B2

Most Often Cited Locations of Discrimination (Source: McCreary Centre Society, 2024)

| Where youth experienced discrimination in the past 12 months (top 5 responses)	
At school	22%
On social media/online	10%
On the street	7%
On public transit	4%
In a store/restaurant	3%

Other risk factors exist for the personal safety of youth in New Westminster including the presence and use of tobacco, substances, cannabis, and alcohol (Figure 30). In the 2023 Adolescent Health Survey 20% of youth reported vaping, a small increase from 2018 (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). Of note, 32% of students reported trying alcohol, a 6% decrease from 2018 (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). Also experiencing a decrease was the percentage of youth reporting trying marijuana (14% down from 20% in 2018) (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). Worth noting is the average age youth first vaped, smoked tobacco, or used alcohol. Vaping was often indicated by youth and stakeholders as an emerging challenge, and it appears that youth are beginning to vape at younger ages than trying other substances (peak at 13 vs other peaks at 15) (McCreary Centre Society, 2024).

Figure B5

Self-Reported Age of First Substance Use (Source: McCreary Centre Society, 2024)

Self-reported age of first substance use among those who use.

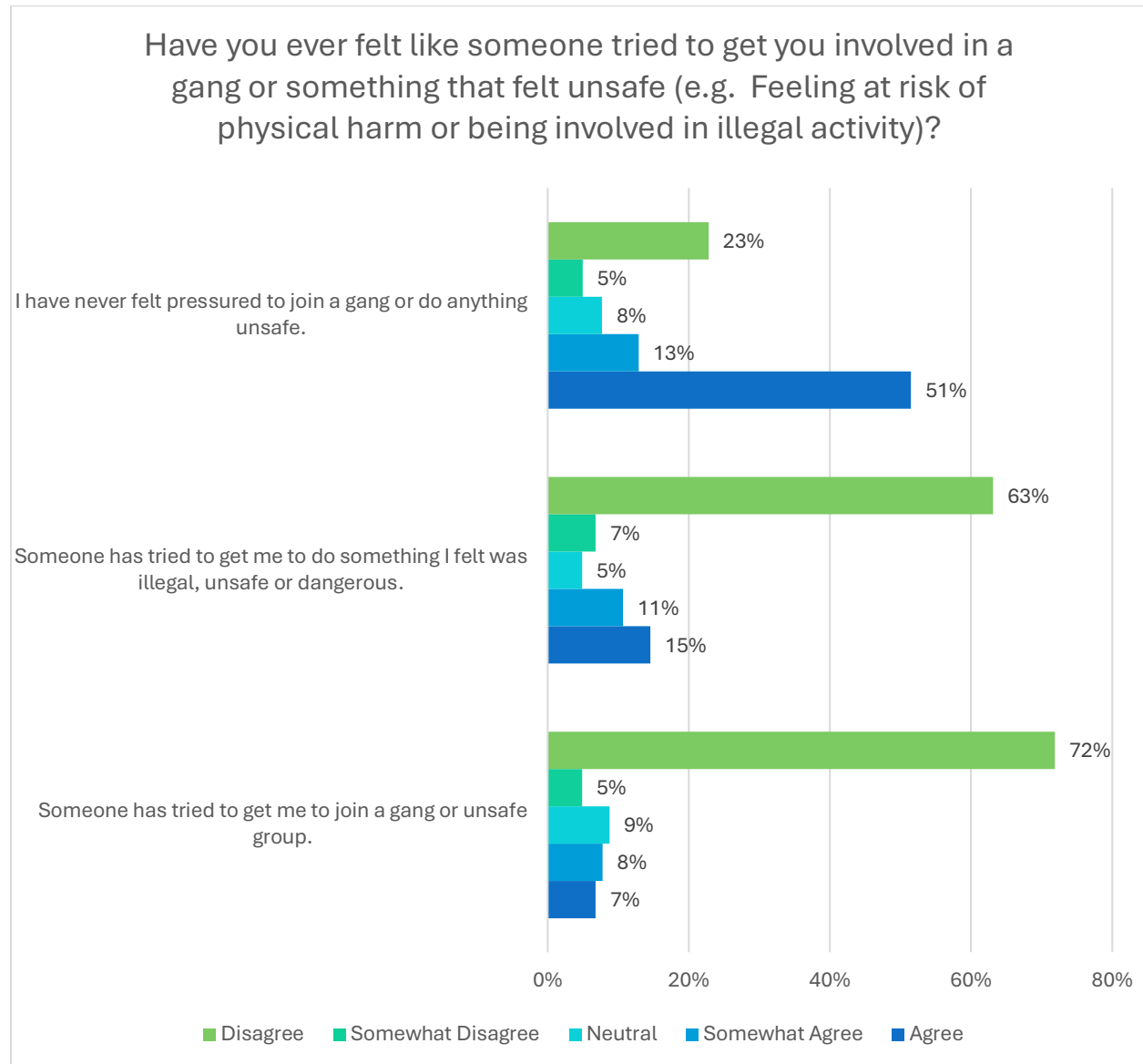— Vaped   — Smoked Tobacco   — Drank Alcohol   — Used Cannabis
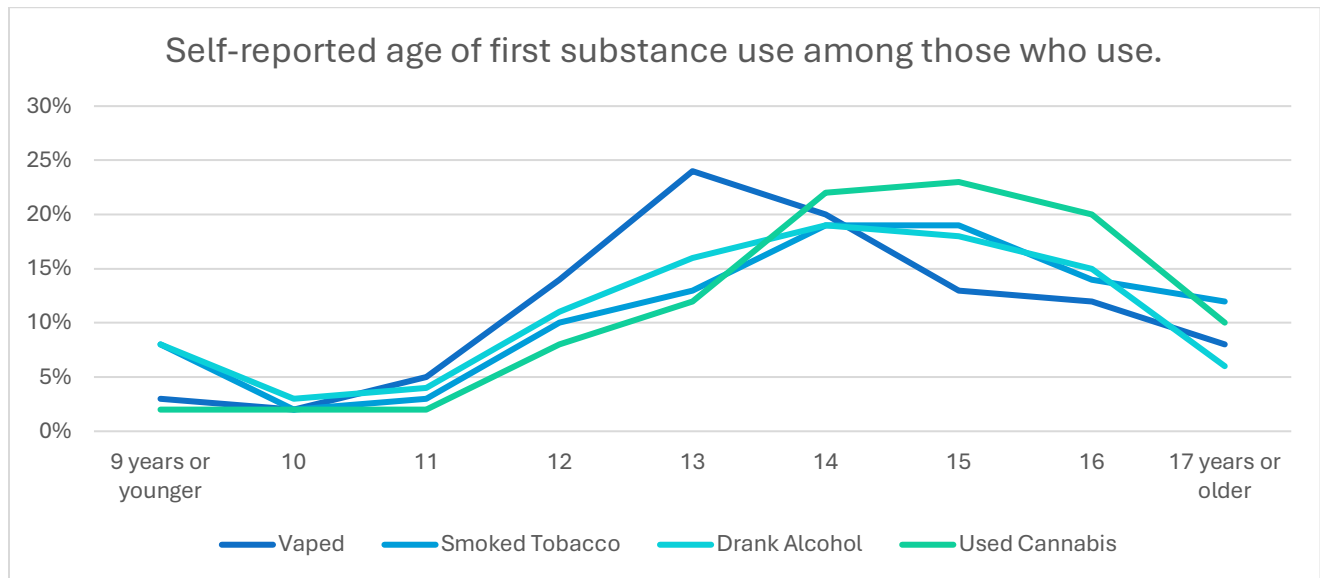
Additionally related to personal safety were themes heard from stakeholders and youth regarding concerns of being recruited for gang or other illicit activities. To understand the extent to which this is affecting the lives of New West youth, the validation survey asked respondents to share their responses to the prompt "have you ever felt like someone tried to get you involved in a gang or something that felt unsafe". Specifically related to gangs, 15% of youth either agreed or somewhat agreed that someone had tried to get them to join a gang or other unsafe group with 77% indicating it had not occurred for them. However, a slightly larger group (26%) indicated they felt at some point someone had tried to get them to do something they felt was unsafe while 70% indicated that had not occurred to them (City of New Westminster, 2024). As this was a specific survey instrument for this project there is no directly comparable data, however a 2015 study conducted among street involved youth in Vancouver found that 33% of youth surveyed had been approached for gang membership (Marshall et al., 2015). Although there is no direct comparable data, these results may serve as a baseline indicator for future evaluation of any prevention or intervention programs that result from the strategy.

Figure B6

Youth Perceptions of Peer Pressure and Recruitment Activity. (Source: City of New Westminster, 2024)

Have you ever felt like someone tried to get you involved in a gang or something that felt unsafe (e.g. Feeling at risk of physical harm or being involved in illegal activity)?

- I have never felt pressured to join a gang or do anything unsafe.
  - Disagree: 23%
  - Somewhat Disagree: 5%
  - Neutral: 8%
  - Somewhat Agree: 13%
  - Agree: 51%
- Someone has tried to get me to do something I felt was illegal, unsafe or dangerous.
  - Disagree: 63%
  - Somewhat Disagree: 7%
  - Neutral: 5%
  - Somewhat Agree: 11%
  - Agree: 15%
- Someone has tried to get me to join a gang or unsafe group.
  - Disagree: 72%
  - Somewhat Disagree: 5%
  - Neutral: 9%
  - Somewhat Agree: 8%
  - Agree: 7%

Legend: Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neutral, Somewhat Agree, Agree

Another concern of note from stakeholders and youth was the perceived prevalence of youth carrying a personal safety weapon such as a knife or pepper spray. To validate and quantify this concern, youth were asked to share the frequency that they had either carried a weapon themselves in the last 3 months, or if they saw someone close to them do the same. 76% of youth who responded had not carried a weapon in the 3-month period while 9% indicated they always did, 7% sometimes did, and 9% rarely did (City of New Westminster, 2024). The perception of others carrying weapons was a different result. 21%

indicated rarely seeing someone else carry a weapon, 16% sometimes seeing someone else carrying a weapon, and 10% always seeing someone else carrying a weapon (City of New Westminster, 2024). Of note, there was only a 1% differentiation between the "always" statements in both questions, which helps to validate the responses. Together, these results tend to suggest that up to 20% of youth in New Westminster have at one time, or more frequently, carried some type of protective weapon with them in the last 3 months. The only comparative data available is from the 2018 Fraser North BC Adolescent Health Survey where 4% of youth surveyed had carried a weapon to school in the last 30 days (Forsyth et al., 2020). Although the scope and frequency of the questions are different, it does suggest there has been an increase in this behavior over the past several years.

Figure B7

Youth Reported Frequency of Carrying a Weapon (Source: City of New Westminster, 2024)
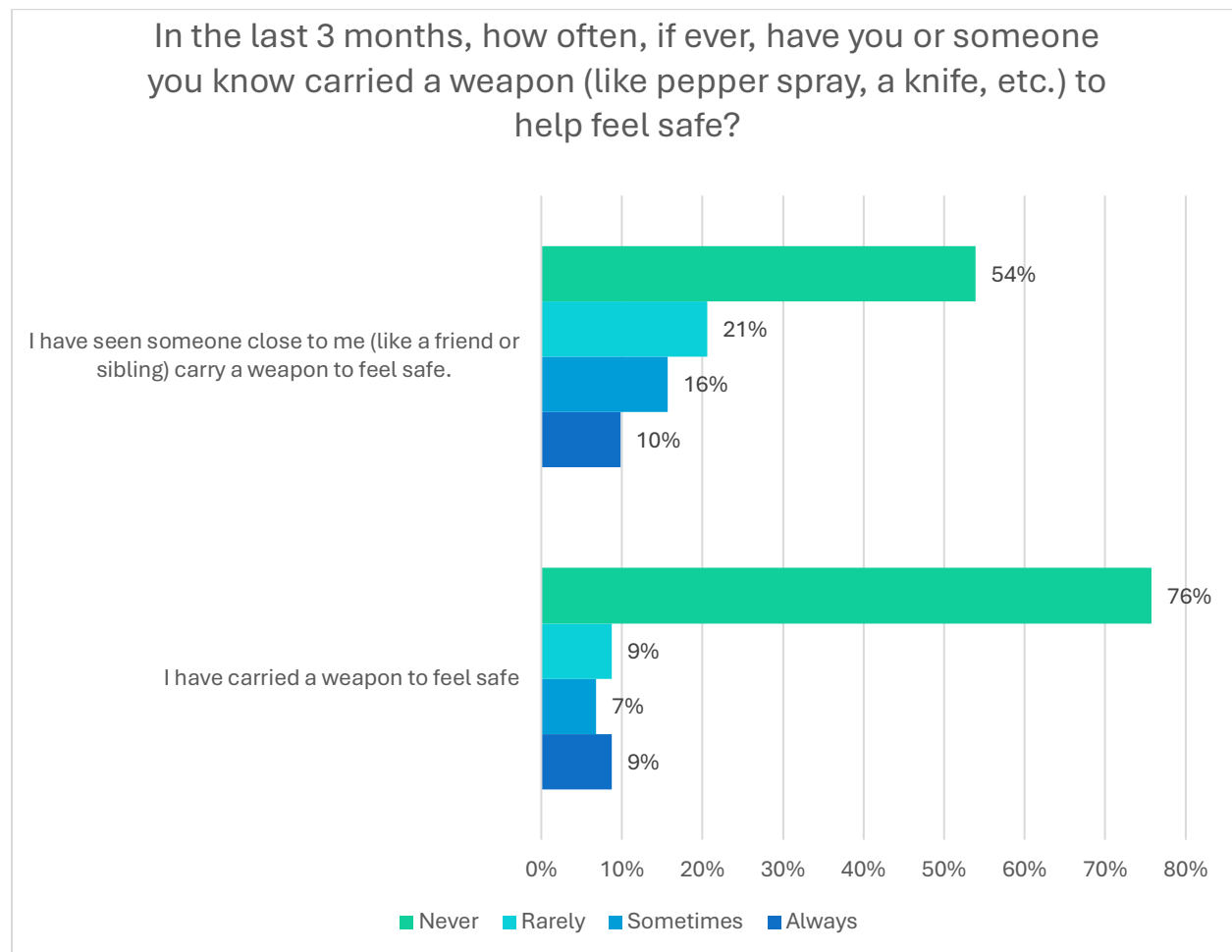
It is vital to note that youth who shared they often carried a weapon indicated they did so not to cause harm to others, but because they felt vulnerable themselves. One youth

shared carrying a weapon that they felt it should be allowed because "Having that reassurance we at least have an option to protect ourselves would be helpful emotionally and physically (*sic*). Many of us are scared since we can get in trouble for self defence, which doesn't seem right morally and emotionally." Ultimately, there are many factors that are informing the decisions of youth to carry weapons, which places them and others at greater risk of negative outcomes and interactions with authorities.

Personal safety is a critical factor influencing youth well-being, and the data highlights the complexities and challenges youth face in New Westminster. Feedback from youth reveals concerns about bullying, discrimination, and harassment, with 36% of youth reporting social bullying and 28% reporting verbal bullying in the past year. Discrimination was most often experienced at school (22%) and attributed to factors like physical appearance, race, and weight. These experiences highlight the need for safe, inclusive spaces and supportive adult relationships to mitigate the impact of these challenges.

Further risk factors, including substance use, gang recruitment, and carrying personal safety weapons, underscore the broader safety concerns among youth. Although the majority of youth do not carry weapons, around 20% of those surveyed have at some point, largely as a means of self-protection rather than aggression. Together, this suggests a growing need for prevention strategies and interventions that prioritize connection, belonging, and mentorship. Addressing the root causes of vulnerability and fostering a supportive community can help ensure youth feel safe and empowered in their environments.

Positive Adult Connections and Role Models

Youth, particularly those facing various barriers, benefit greatly from social connections with positive adults and role models in their lives (Centre for the Study of Social Policy, n.d.). These vital relationships serve as protection for youth as well as guidance in times of stress or personal difficulty. In the engagement and validation engagement, many called for more trusted adults who are approachable and willing to help, rather than strictly enforcing rules. One youth noted, "It would be helpful for more trusted people to talk to when students are mentally burdened." Others expressed frustration with how adults handle issues, suggesting that they "talk to the troublemakers rather than just dissolving an issue."

To further build an understanding of the nature and types of connections that youth are seeking, the validation survey and other data inputs were used. In the 2022/23 Youth Development Instrument, 43% of youth had a lower level of agreement with the statement "In my neighbourhood/community, there is an adult who really cares about me" which is

slightly higher than the provincial average among grade 10-12 students and only 20% had a higher level of agreement, lower than the provincial average (Samji et al., 2023). Youth who responded to the Middle Years Development Instrument were asked a similar question. Youth reported high quality connections with adults at home (69%), in the community (38%), and in school (49%). Of note, youth in the MDI were most likely to report lower quality connections with adults in the community (32%) than at school (14%) and at home (10%) (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023).

Figure B8

Youth Self-Reported Quality of Connections With Adults (Middle Years) (Source: Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023)
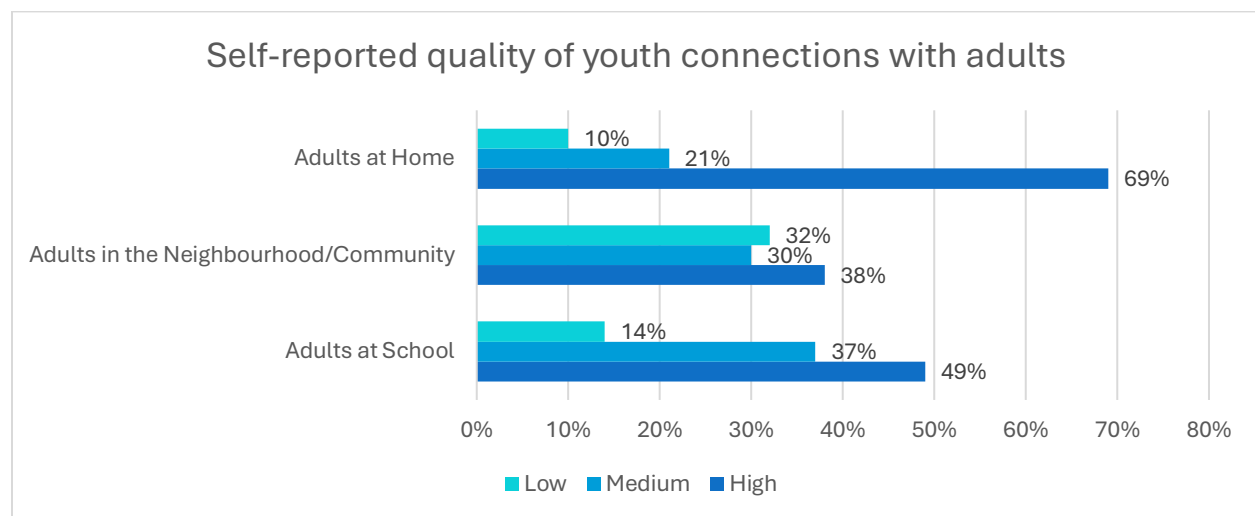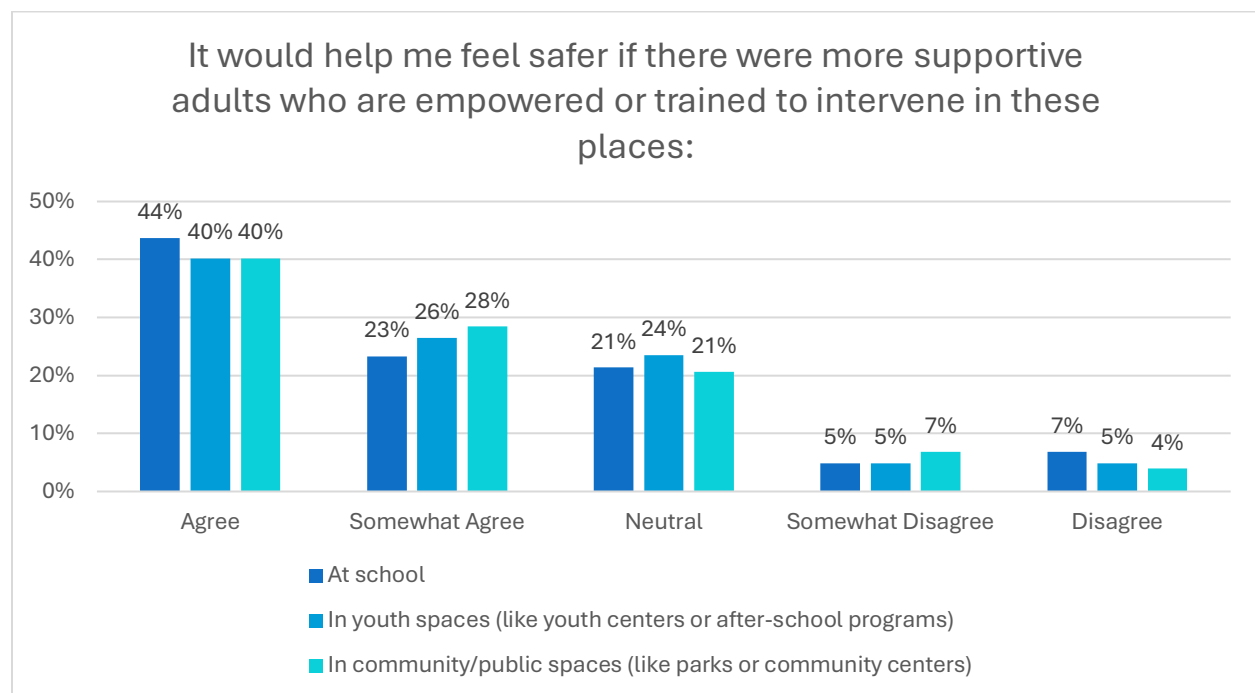

Also related to connections, the 2023 Adolescent Health Survey from the MacCreary Centre Society provides additional context. According to their survey, 1 in 4 youth who responded did not feel they had at least one adult in their community (outside of their family and school) who they felt cared about them (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). That said, there has been an increase from 2018 in how many youths felt they had an adult they could talk to if they were having a serious problem, including adults in their family (5% increase to 75%) and an adult outside their family (8% increase to 32%) (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). However, the increase in connection with adults may not be corresponding to an increase in community connection. 41% of youth felt quite or very connected to their community while 22% felt very little or no connection to the community, which is mostly unchanged from previous years (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). Connection and belonging are important protective factors for positive youth development and these results can be used as future indicators of progress.

Many of the concerns heard from youth were related to a desire for adults to take an active role in intervening in safety related concerns. The validation survey asked if more supportive adults empowered or trained to intervene would help youth feel safer in different spaces. Most of the youth who responded agree that more trained adults in school (67%), youth spaces (66%), and in public (68%) would help them feel safer (City of New Westminster, 2024).

Figure B9

Youth reported agreement to having adults empowered or trained to intervene. (Source: City of New Westminster, 2024)

It would help me feel safer if there were more supportive adults who are empowered or trained to intervene in these places:

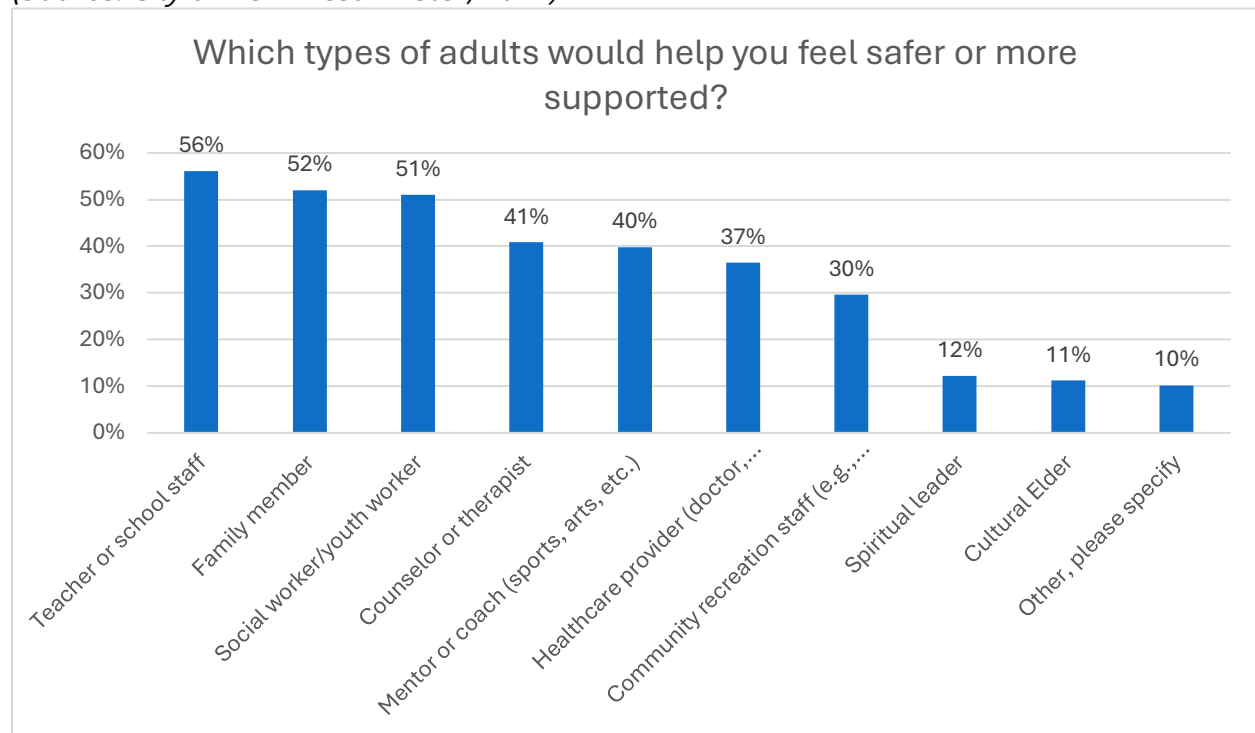|	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree
At school	44%	23%	21%	5%	7%
In youth spaces (like youth centers or after-school programs)	40%	26%	24%	5%	5%
In community/public spaces (like parks or community centers)	40%	28%	21%	7%	4%

To help identify who that may be, youth were asked to share which type of adults could help them feel safer if they were to assist more in moments of need.

Figure B10

Youth Reported "Types" of Adults That Would Help Them Feel Safer or More Supported (Source: City of New Westminster, 2024)

Which types of adults would help you feel safer or more supported?

Type	%
Teacher or school staff	56%
Family member	52%
Social worker/youth worker	51%
Counselor or therapist	41%
Mentor or coach (sports, arts, etc.)	40%
Healthcare provider (doctor,...)	37%
Community recreation staff (e.g.,...)	30%
Spiritual leader	12%
Cultural Elder	11%
Other, please specify	10%

56% indicated teachers or school staff, with family (52%), social worker/youth worker (51%), counselor or therapist (41%), and mentor or coach (40%) rounding out the top five (City of New Westminster, 2024). When asked to detail the "other" responses, youth frequently mentioned authority figures such as police or security services in addition to friends.

When asked what other ideas they had to improve safety, youth in New Westminster expressed a desire for improved safety through visible security measures and better environments. Suggestions included "more cameras so that it can witness everything if anything happens" and a "school security guard" to address concerns about weapons being brought into schools. Safer transit stations like New Westminster Station and smaller, quieter spaces within schools were also highlighted as ways to foster a sense of safety. One youth emphasized the need for spaces that "feel too large to feel comfortable" to be reimagined for greater comfort and security.

Youth in New Westminster have highlighted the critical importance of positive adult connections in fostering their sense of safety, belonging, and resilience. Strong, supportive relationships with adults serve as a protective factor, helping youth navigate challenges, build confidence, and make healthier choices. When these connections are missing, youth

are at greater risk of feeling isolated, disengaged, and vulnerable to negative influences, such as unsafe peer relationships or risky behaviors. One youth noted, "It would be helpful for more trusted people to talk to when students are mentally burdened," emphasizing the need for adults who are approachable and proactive in their support.
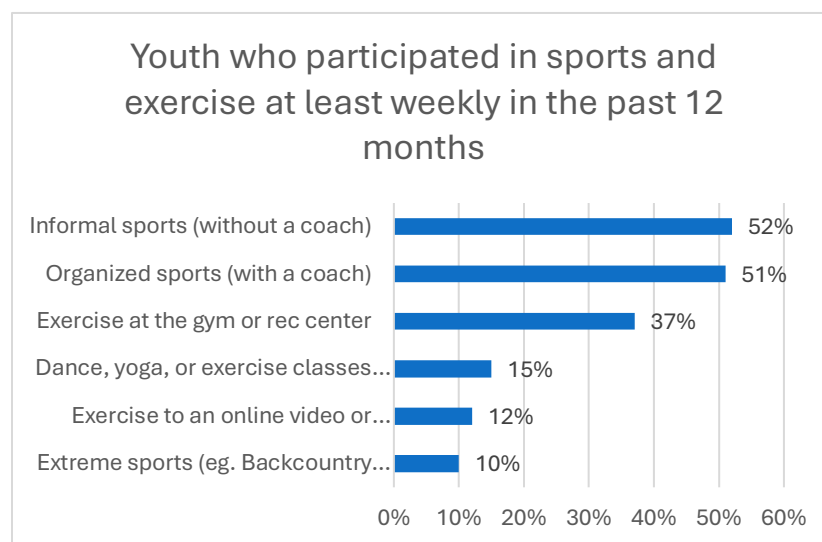
Failure to address this gap risks perpetuating cycles of disconnection and harm. As the data shows, while youth report stronger connections with adults at home and school, community-based relationships remain weaker, with 1 in 4 youth stating they lack even one caring adult in their community. This underscores the need for coordinated efforts between schools, families, community organizations, and local authorities to create a network of support. By fostering mentorship, training more adults to intervene effectively, and ensuring safe spaces in schools, youth hubs, and public areas, New Westminster can provide the foundation for youth to thrive. Connection must be prioritized as a cornerstone of safety and resilience, as it directly impacts the developmental and emotional well-being of young people in the community.

Increased Access to Programs and Services

The last strategic priority for youth is focused on reducing or eliminating barriers for youth to participate in positive programs and services that develop resiliency and enhance protective factors. Youth and stakeholders identified a desire to have more opportunities for youth to engage in programs and services that have no barriers to entry, especially for youth who are living with more risk factors (such as financial insecurity, living alone, etc.).

Figure B11

Youth participation in sports and exercise. (Source: McCreary Centre Society, 2024)

Youth who participated in sports and exercise at least weekly in the past 12 months

Informal sports (without a coach)	52%
Organized sports (with a coach)	51%
Exercise at the gym or rec center	37%
Dance, yoga, or exercise classes...	15%
Exercise to an online video or...	12%
Extreme sports (eg. Backcountry...	10%

The 2023 Adolescent Health Survey provides some context to access to recreation programs (Figure 36). 1 in 2 youth were participating in either organized or informal sports at least weekly while fewer (1 in 3) were participating in
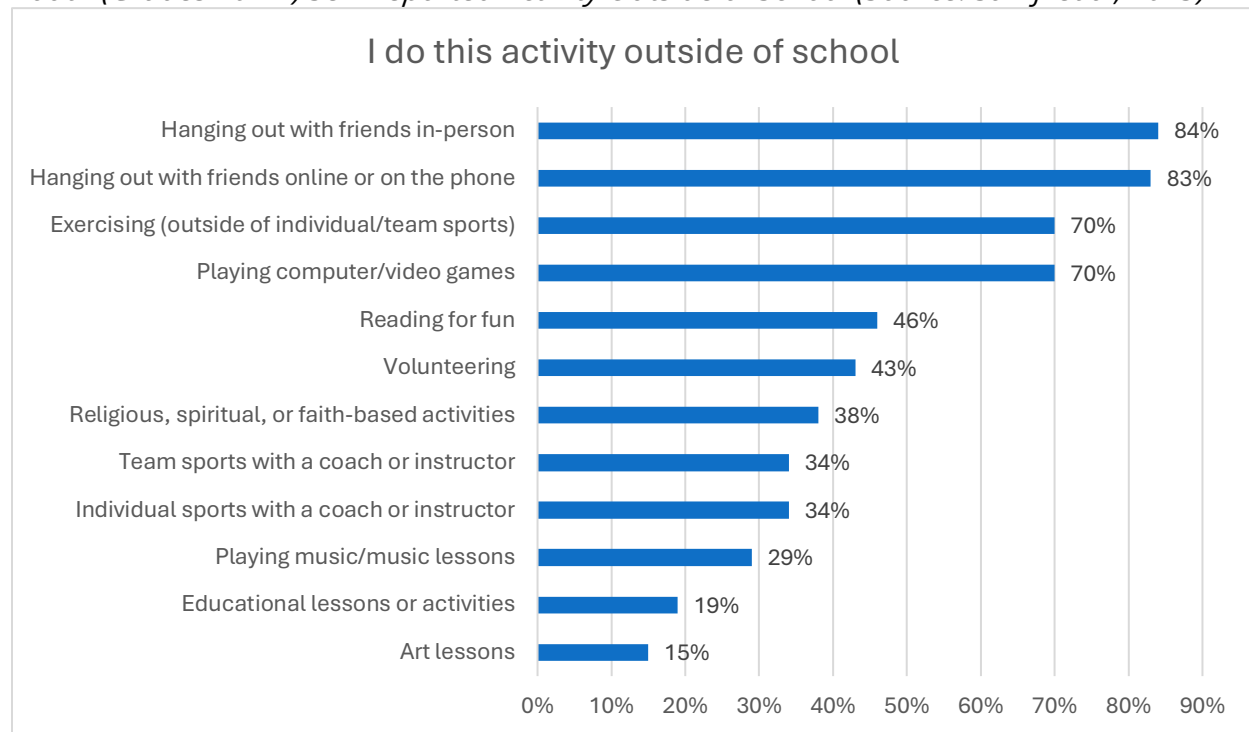
exercise at a gym or rec centre[1] (McCreary Centre Society, 2024).

In addition, both the MDI and the YDI assessed youth participation in extracurricular activities which provides additional understanding. In the Middle Years Development Instrument 18% of youth did not participate in any organized activity, 19% participated once or twice per week, and 63% participated in activities 3 or more times per week (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023). For those in grades 10-12 the YDI suggests that the most common activity youth participate in outside of school was spending time with friends either in person or online (84%), exercising (70%), and playing computer/video games (70%) (Samji et al., 2023). These results tend to support the results of the asset mapping where younger age ranges have greater access to critical hours programming than high school aged youth. As such, middle years youth appear to be engaging in programs at a greater rate than high school youth.

Figure B12

Youth (Grades 10-12) Self-Reported Activity Outside of School (Source: Samji et al, 2023)

I do this activity outside of school

Activity	Percentage
Hanging out with friends in-person	84%
Hanging out with friends online or on the phone	83%
Exercising (outside of individual/team sports)	70%
Playing computer/video games	70%
Reading for fun	46%
Volunteering	43%
Religious, spiritual, or faith-based activities	38%
Team sports with a coach or instructor	34%
Individual sports with a coach or instructor	34%
Playing music/music lessons	29%
Educational lessons or activities	19%
Art lessons	15%

To identify barriers to participation, the validation survey asked youth "what makes it hard for you to join youth programs or recreation activities"? Youth who participated indicated
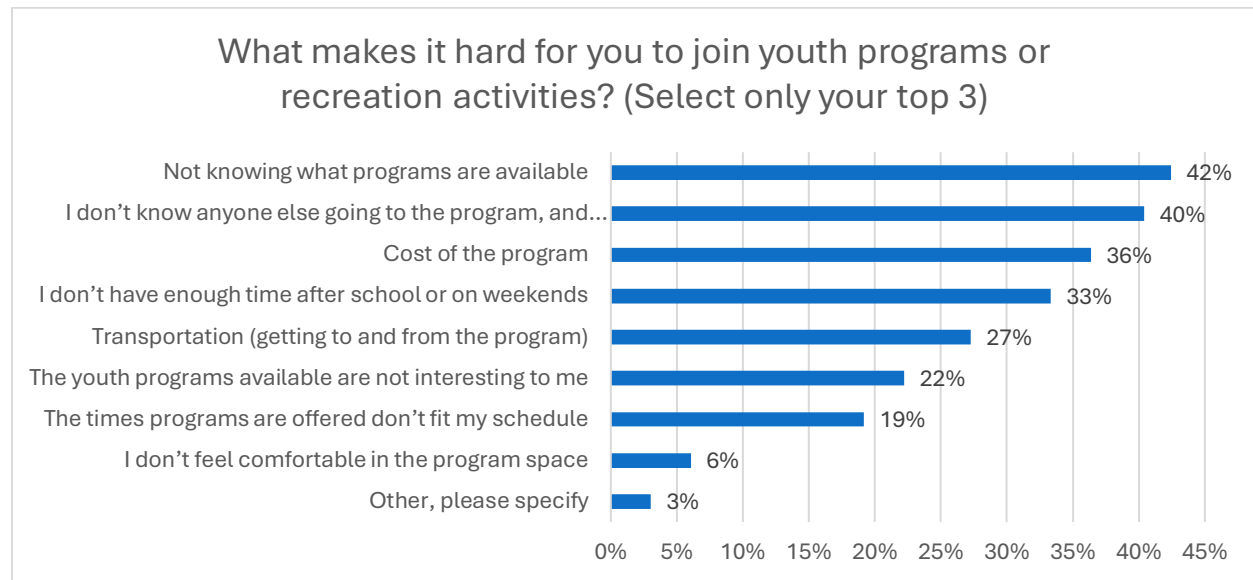
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[1] Note: This survey was completed prior to the opening of the təməsewʼtxʷ centre.

that awareness (42%), not knowing others going to the program (40%), and cost (36%) were the top three barriers to program access (City of New Westminster, 2024).

Figure B13

Youth Self-Reported Barriers to Accessing Programs or Activities (Source: City of New Westminster, 2024)

When asked what recreation type programs would be of support, youth in New Westminster expressed a strong interest in sports and physical activities, with many suggesting programs for basketball, volleyball, soccer, hockey, rugby, and football. Combat sports like karate, boxing, and Brazilian jiu-jitsu were also mentioned as popular options. One youth proposed, "A program about skating, roller skating, or inline skating would be fun to see." In addition to sports, there's enthusiasm for creative pursuits, including art, music, singing, and unique activities like crafting and baking. One suggestion was for "more affordable music and performance arts courses, as well as more first aid and certificate trainings."

Additionally, many youth are eager for opportunities to develop career skills and give back to their community. Ideas included "programs for future first responder jobs like doctor, nurse, firefighter," as well as mechanics, welding, and business-related activities. Volunteering opportunities are especially valued, with some preferring options in healthcare, environmental projects, and community festivals. One youth expressed interest in programs that "help give back to the community and build up volunteer hours." Friendly, inclusive spaces like youth centers, school carnivals, and outdoor activities were also highlighted as ways to foster connection and engagement.

Access to Support Services

Access to support services emerged as a critical priority for fostering youth resilience in New Westminster. Feedback from youth and community stakeholders consistently highlighted the importance of removing barriers to services such as mental health support, counseling, and recreational opportunities. Youth shared challenges such as long waitlists, exclusionary service criteria, and a lack of awareness of available resources, all of which hinder their ability to access help when needed. As one service provider noted, "When a youth is ready for help, services have long wait-lists or the youth may not meet a mandate." Addressing these barriers is essential to building a more inclusive and supportive system where all youth can access the resources they need to thrive. This section explores the statistical data and insights from existing data and the validation survey to provide context for this strategic priority and inform future actions.

Figure B14

Youth Reported Confidence in Knowing Where to Seek Help (Source: City of New Westminster, 2024)
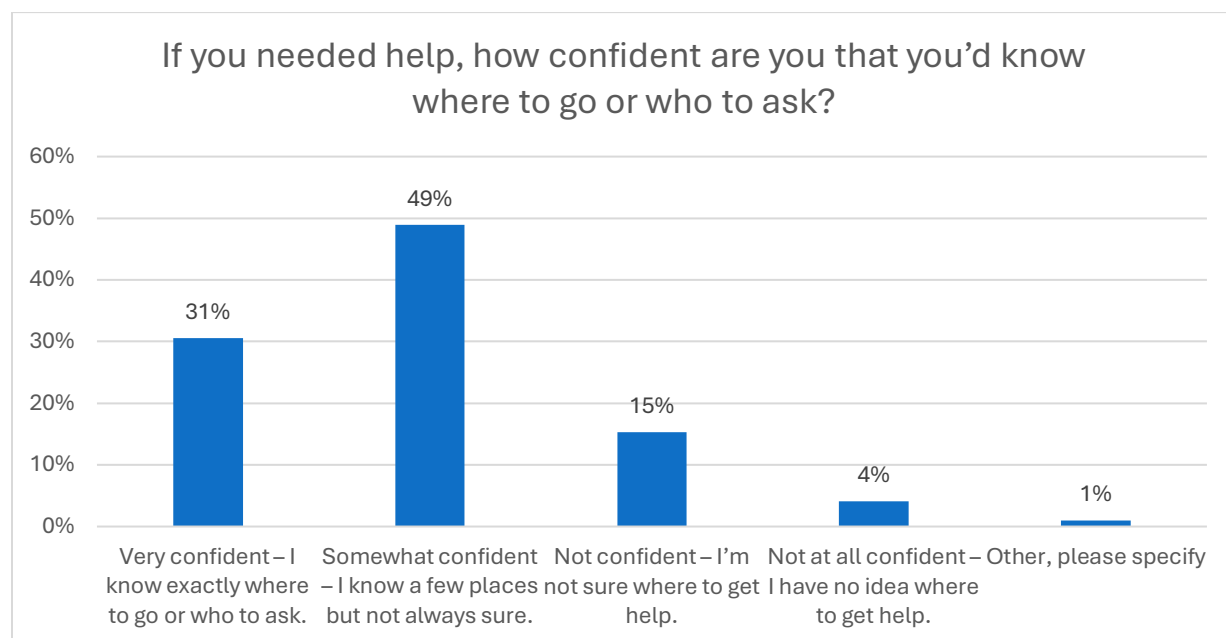
Youth who participated in the validation survey were asked to rate their confidence in knowing where to go if they needed help (Figure 39). 31% of youth were very confident in knowing where to go, 49% were somewhat confident, and 19% were not confident in knowing where to go or who to ask. Similarly, the McCreary survey found that specific to mental health services, 63% of youth who reported needing services did not access supports in the 12 months prior to the survey. When asked why they did not access

services, 18% indicated their parent or guardian would not take them, 56% did not want their parent or guardian to know, 52% thought or hoped the problem would go away, 33% indicated being afraid of what they would be told, 27% were afraid someone they knew might see them, and 3% were unable to go when services were open[2] (McCreary Centre Society, 2024).

The youth validation survey provided additional context to more general support services for youth (Figure 40). Youth who participated shared that a fear of judgement (47%) or discomfort (44%) were barriers for them to access services. Additionally, knowledge of programs or services (37%) or complicated processes (22%) were also high on their list of barriers (City of New Westminster, 2024).

Figure B15

Youth Reported Barriers to Accessing Help (Source: City of New Westminster, 2024)
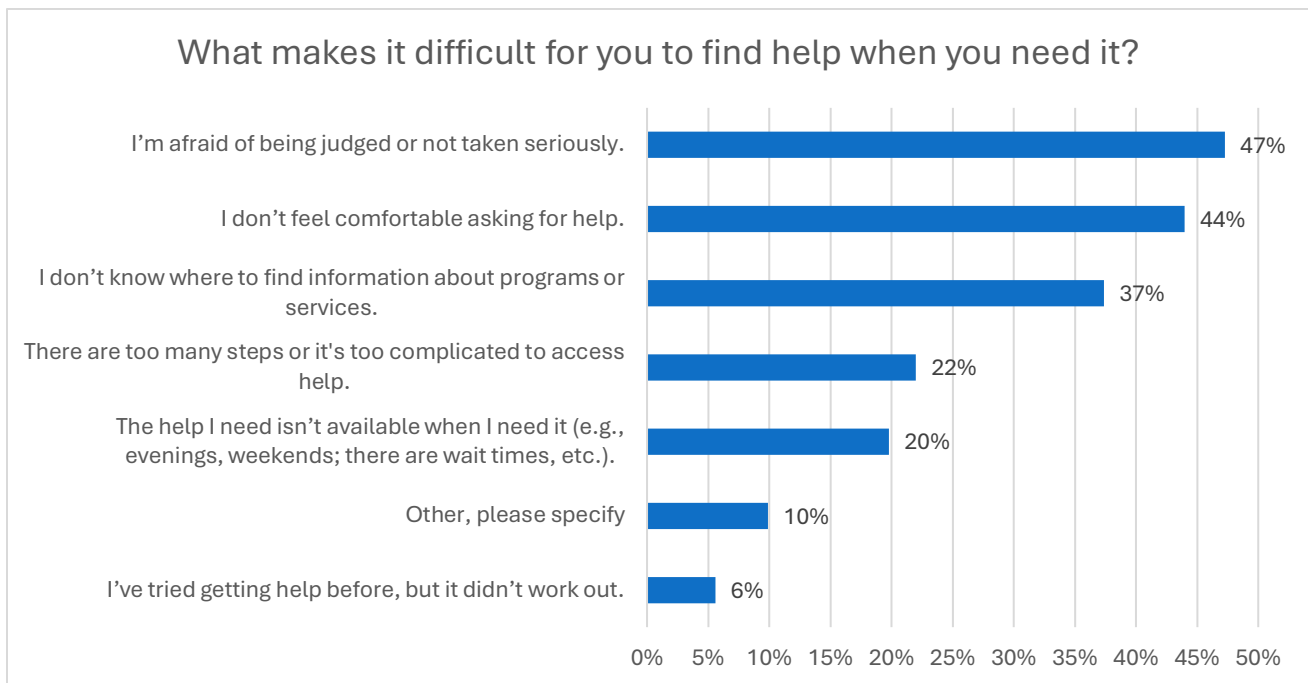
The survey also provided youth opportunity to write in responses. Youth feedback highlighted several barriers that make it challenging to find or seek help when needed. A common theme is discomfort or hesitation in reaching out. One youth shared, "I just don't want to talk or ask for help," reflecting the internal struggle some face when navigating support systems. Another stated, "I'm afraid of being judged or not taken seriously," indicating a fear of invalidation or stigma. Others pointed to logistical challenges, with one

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[2] Youth were able to select more than one reason.

youth saying, "The help I've learned I need is too expensive, or affordable health is too far away." Similarly, some mentioned difficulty with accessibility, such as, "There are too many steps or it's too complicated to access help."

Visibility and proactive outreach also emerged as concerns. One suggestion was, "To clearly present where help is located and who to ask for," emphasizing the importance of clear information. Another youth proposed, "Seeing banners and posters around the city in higher traffic places and around schools might help," highlighting a need for awareness campaigns to make resources more accessible and visible. Additionally, large-scale events like grade assemblies were seen as ineffective, with one youth explaining, "It may be hard logistically, but a mandatory meeting with school counselors and healthcare staff on a smaller scale might help."

While some youth expressed confidence in accessing help, others focused on the need for better availability and belief in their concerns. One youth said, "People always being available and people who BELIEVE me when I say stuff," stressing the importance of trusted and empathetic adults. Another noted the value of being in a supportive group, saying, "Be with friends," which underscores the role of peer support in fostering comfort.

Appendix C – Community Data Profile

Community Youth Profile

The City of New Westminster is a vibrant community in the centre of the Metro Vancouver Region and is home to over 78,000 residents. As of the 2021 Canadian census of communities, New Westminster has 10,430 youth between the ages of 12 to 25 actively living in the community, representing 14.7% of the total population. Although this is slightly lower than Greater Vancouver (17%) and BC (15.4%) it is slightly above the Canadian totals estimated at 13.4% (Statistics Canada, 2021). Similar to Canada and BC there is a relatively even split between men (51%) and women (49%).

New Westminster population has experienced consistent growth with an 11% population growth between 2016 and 2021(Statistics Canada, 2024a). However, in that time the total population of youth aged 12 to 25 has experienced slight contraction (-0.3%). This is largely due to population contractions among those aged 18 – 22 years old, with slight increases in the population of those aged 12-17 (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Figure C1

Change (%) in Population of Youth Aged 12 to 25 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2022)
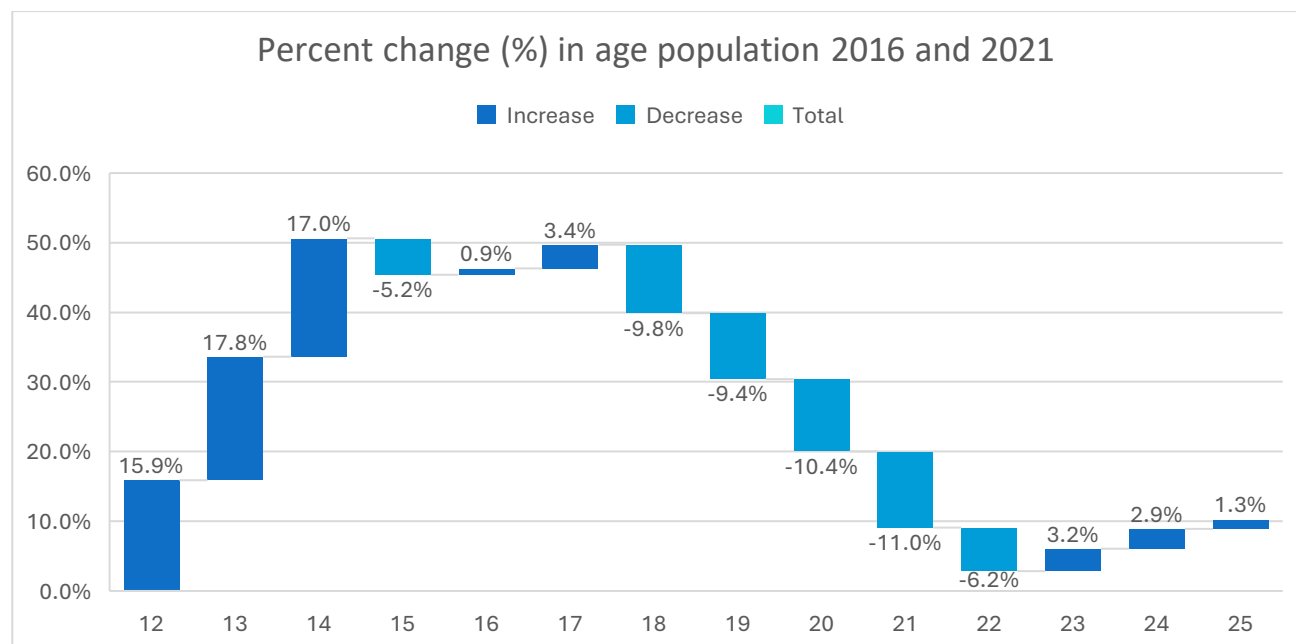
Common Living Arrangements

Analyzing youth living arrangements is important for tailoring a youth resiliency strategy to meet diverse needs. Youth from single-parent homes or non-traditional arrangements may
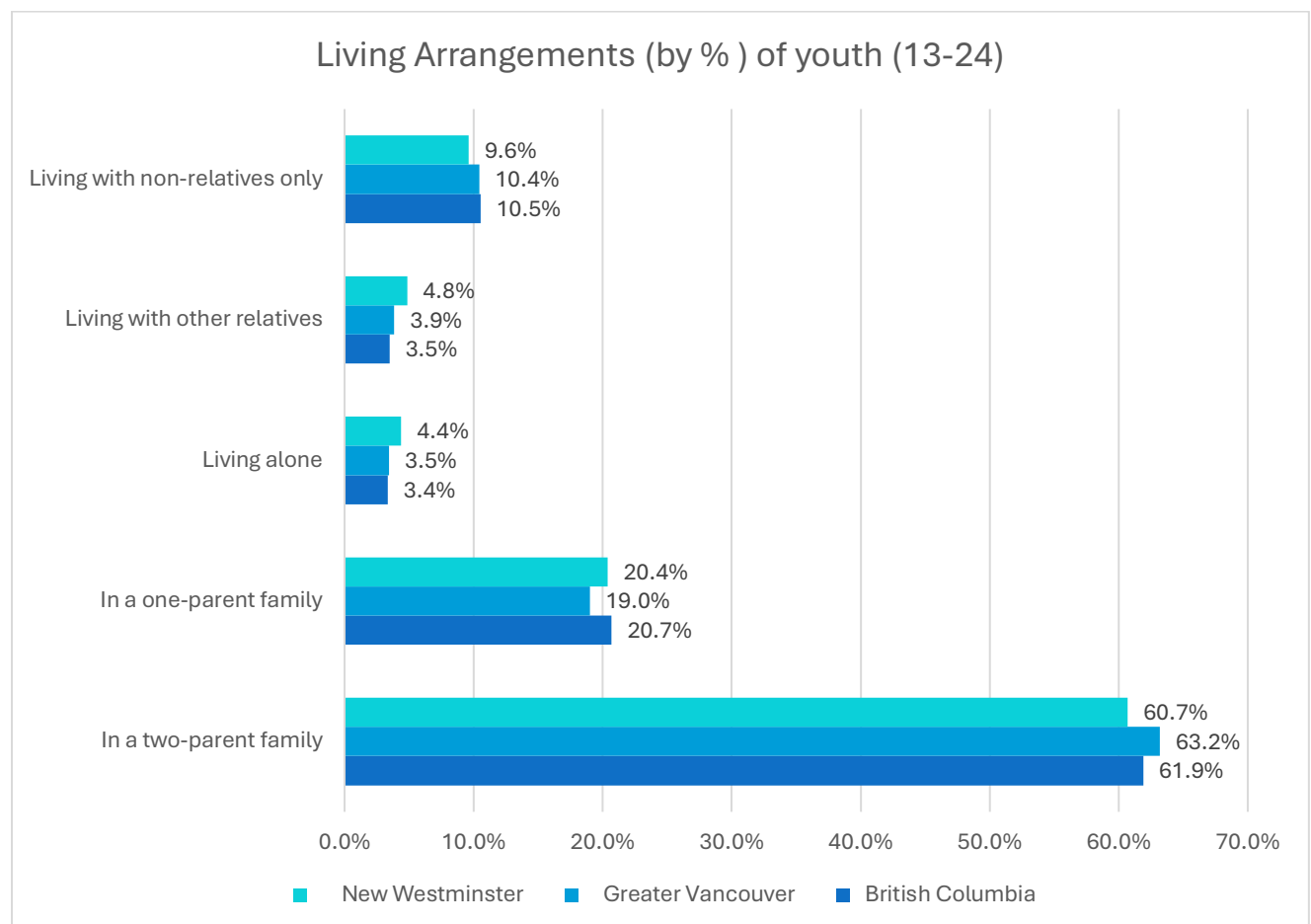
face challenges like financial instability, limited parental availability, or reduced access to resources. By understanding these dynamics, strategies can provide targeted support, such as mentorship programs, flexible scheduling, or emotional and social resources, ensuring all youth have opportunities to build resilience and thrive despite their circumstances.

New Westminster youth have overall similar living arrangements between one and two parent families as the BC and Greater Vancouver averages. Overall rates are slightly lower than BC and slightly elevated from Greater Vancouver averages, however not in a statistically significant amount. Rates of youth between 13 and 24 living with other relatives (4.8) and living alone (4.4%) are slightly elevated from both BC and Greater Vancouver rates (Statistics Canada, 2024a).

Figure C2

Living Arrangements (%) of Youth Aged 13 to 24 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)

Living Arrangements (by %) of youth (13-24)

Living Arrangement	New Westminster	Greater Vancouver	British Columbia
Living with non-relatives only	9.6%	10.4%	10.5%
Living with other relatives	4.8%	3.9%	3.5%
Living alone	4.4%	3.5%	3.4%
In a one-parent family	20.4%	19.0%	20.7%
In a two-parent family	60.7%	63.2%	61.9%

Low Income Poverty

Calculating low-income poverty rates for youth is important because poverty affects their access to food, housing, and opportunities like education and activities. Youth living in poverty face more stress and challenges, making it harder to build resilience. Understanding these rates helps create informed strategies that give all youth a fair chance to succeed and grow stronger.

Figure C3

Prevalence (%) of Low Income (LIM-AT) of Youth Aged 13 to 24 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)
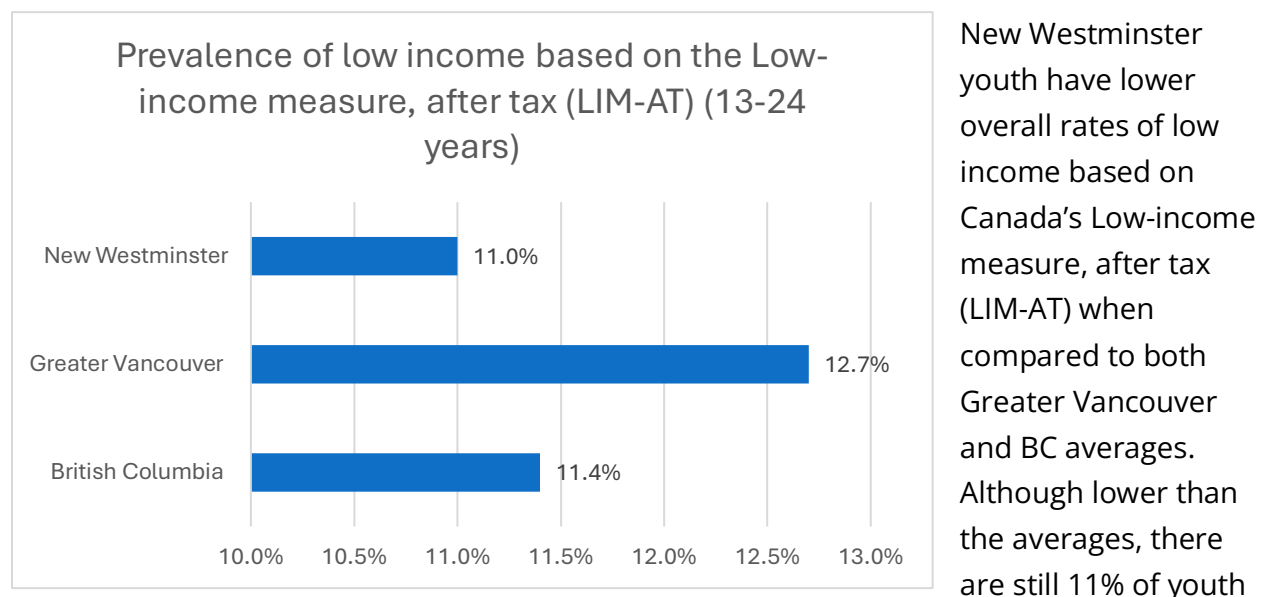
New Westminster youth have lower overall rates of low income based on Canada's Low-income measure, after tax (LIM-AT) when compared to both Greater Vancouver and BC averages. Although lower than the averages, there are still 11% of youth in New Westminster living below the LIM-AT thresholds (Statistics Canada, 2024a).

Newcomers to Canada and Visibility

Analyzing Newcomers to Canada data is important for the youth resilience strategy because newcomer youth often face elevated risk factors such as adapting to a new culture, language barriers, and limited support networks. They may also experience social isolation, discrimination, or difficulties accessing services, which can increase their risk of mental health struggles and academic challenges.

New Westminster has an elevated population of Newcomers to Canada (32%) as compared to the BC (23%) averages while being comparable to the Metro Vancouver Region (32%) in 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2024a).
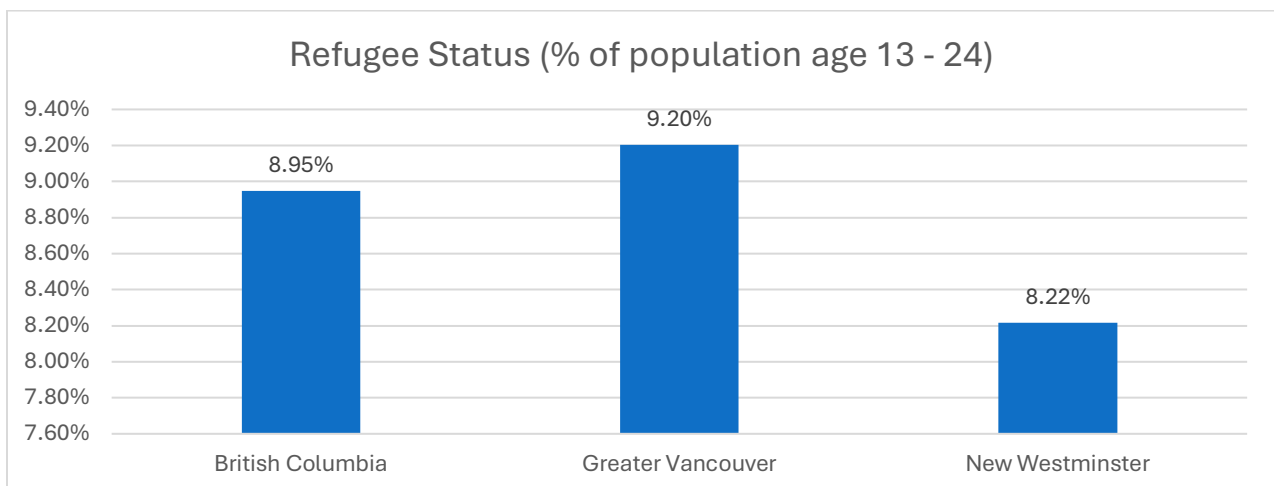
Figure C4

Youth Residency Status (%) of Youth Aged 13 to 24 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)

Youth residency status (% of population aged 13 - 24 years)

	Non-immigrants	Permanent Residents	Non-permanent residents
New Westminster	68%	20%	12%
Greater Vancouver	67%	20%	12%
British Columbia	77%	14%	9%
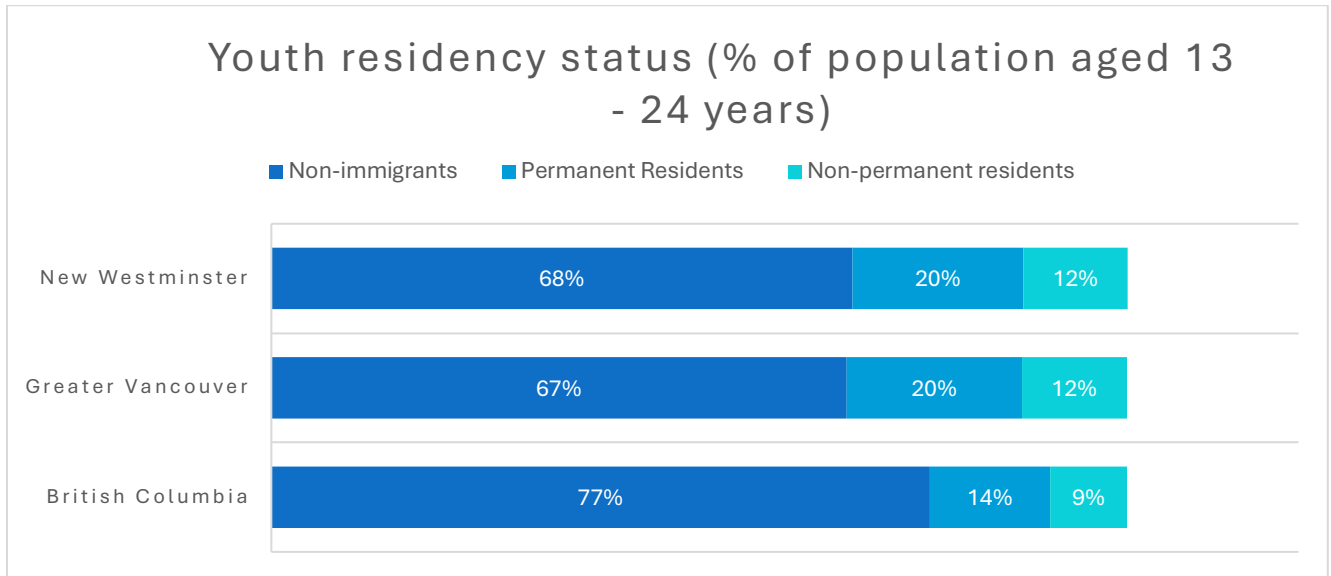
New Westminster is a Sanctuary City, which may contribute to the higher than provincial averages of newcomers, especially non-permanent residents. This means that newcomers to the community can access all services without their immigration status being questioned, a vital tool in building welcoming and inclusive communities.

Figure C5

Refugee status (%) of Youth Aged 13 to 24 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)

Refugee Status (% of population age 13 - 24)

- British Columbia: 8.95%
- Greater Vancouver: 9.20%
- New Westminster: 8.22%

Youth with refugee status may often experience elevated risk factors than their mainstream Canadian or Economic immigrant peers (Motti-Stefanidi & Masten, 2017;

Saverimuthu, 2015). Of note, New Westminster has a lower-than-average proportion of refugee youth aged 13 -24 than both BC and Greater Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2024a).

Using "visible minority" as a demographic indicator can help identify inequities, monitor diversity, and guide strategies to support racialized groups if necessary. It's useful for tracking progress and ensuring representation. However, the term is broad and lumps together diverse groups, masking their unique experiences. It can also reinforce the idea of being "different" and doesn't address overlapping challenges, like those faced by Indigenous peoples, who are excluded from this category. While it can highlight inequities, it may oversimplify complex issues and needs. However, in the scope of this project it is important to identify if there are specific groups requiring additional attention and support for youth resiliency.

Figure C6

Visible Minority Population (%) of Youth Aged 13 to 24 by Area (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)
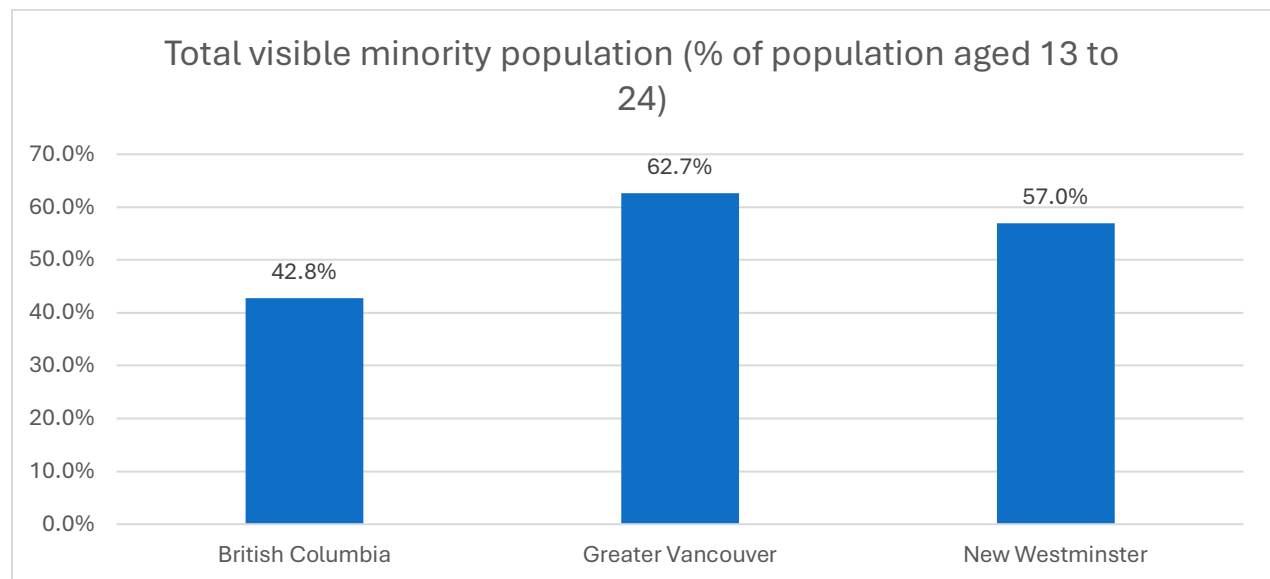
As shown, 57% of the youth population between 13 and 24 in New Westminster identify as being from a visible minority group. Figure C6 identifies specific visible minority groups identified in the 2021 census (Statistics Canada, 2024a).

South Asian, Filipino, and Chinese youth are the predominate groups of visible minorities, representing 35% of the total population of youth aged 13-24 in the community (see Figure C7; Statistics Canada, 2024a).

Figure C7

Visible Minority Population (%) of Youth Aged 13 to 24 by Ethnicity (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)
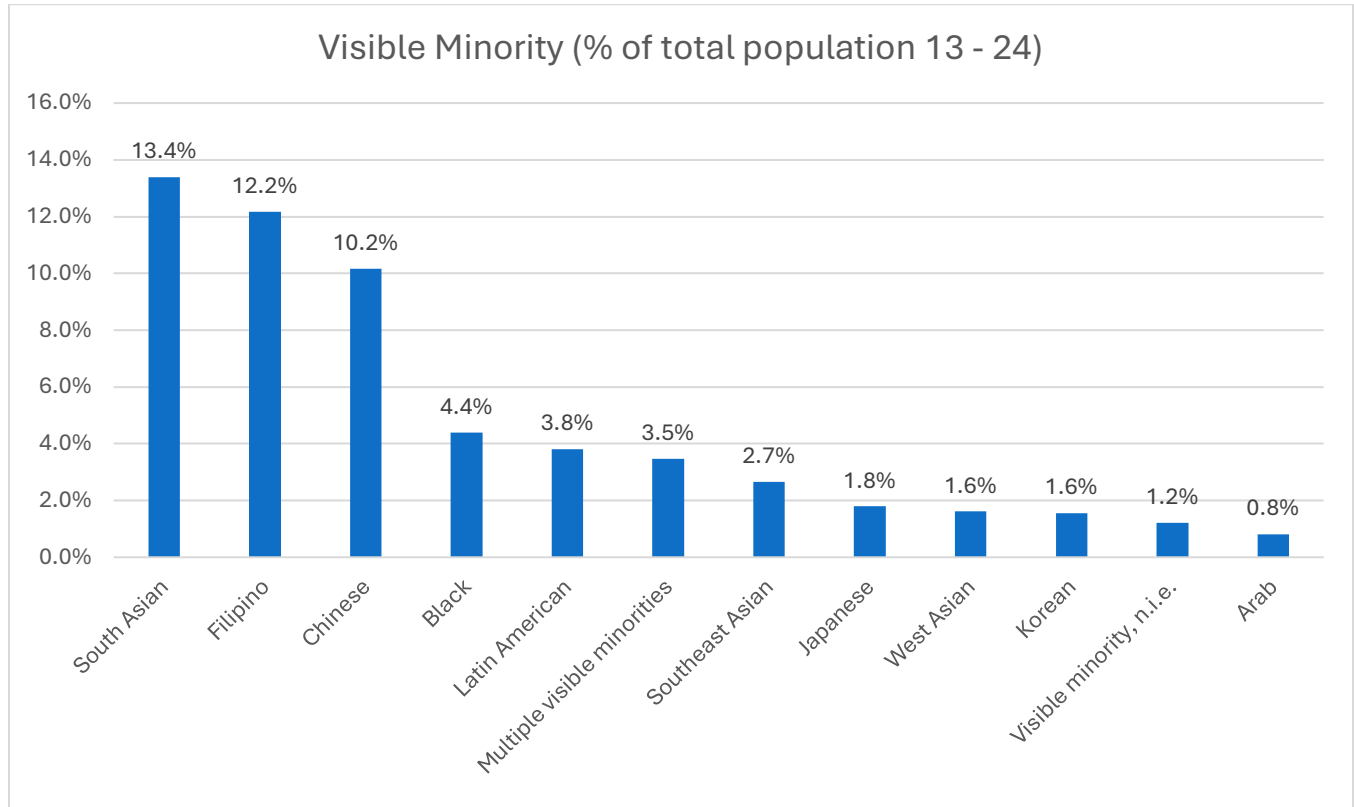
Note. 'n.i.e.' refers to any responses written in by census participants.
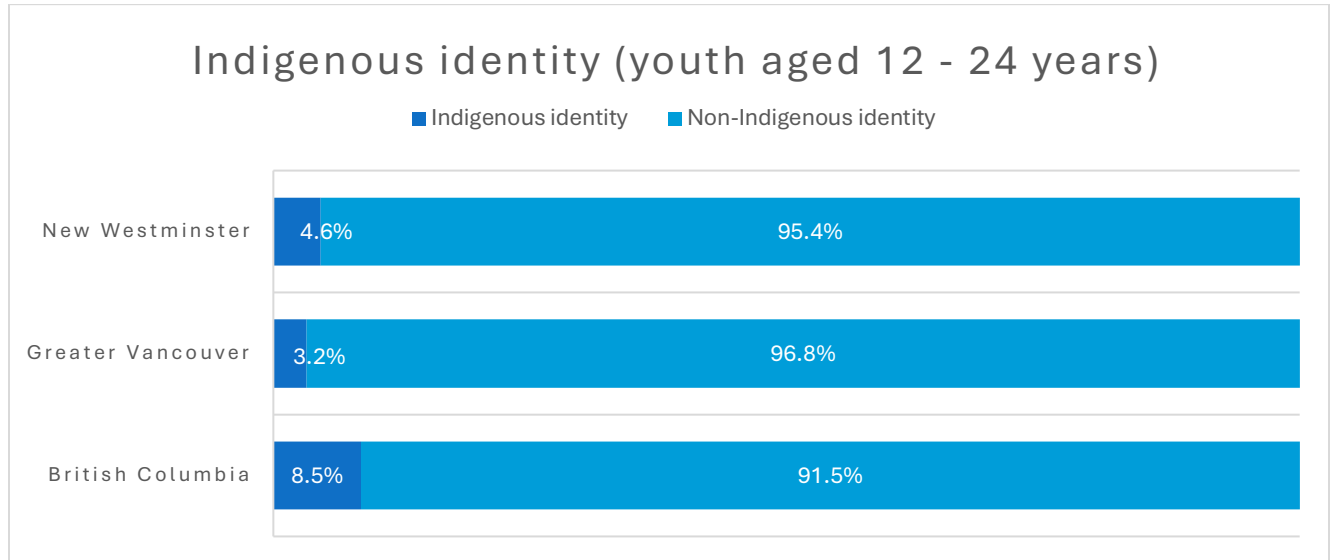
Like Newcomer youth, Indigenous youth in Canada can experience increased risk factors due to a variety of historical and contemporary factors (Hodgson et al., 2022). New Westminster has made commitments to Truth and Reconciliation as such, it is important to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous identity in this project.

Indigenous youth represent 4.6% of the 13–24-year-old youth population in New Westminster. This is higher than the Metro Vancouver Region and lower than the BC average. Of those with Indigenous identity, 1.8% are Metis and 2.7% are First Nations (Statistics Canada, 2024a).

Figure C8

Community Compare, Youth Indigenous Identity (% of Population) Youth Aged 13 to 24 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)

Indigenous identity (youth aged 12 - 24 years)

■ Indigenous identity   ■ Non-Indigenous identity

New Westminster: 4.6% | 95.4%
Greater Vancouver: 3.2% | 96.8%
British Columbia: 8.5% | 91.5%

Table C1

Demographic Analysis of Indigenous Youth in New Westminster, aged 12 to 24 (source: Statistics Canada, 2024a)

Youth (12 – 24) Indigenous Identity	British Columbia	Greater Vancouver	New Westminster
Indigenous identity	8.5%	3.2%	4.6%
Single Indigenous responses	8.2%	3.1%	4.4%
First Nations (North American Indian)	5.4%	1.9%	2.7%
Métis	2.7%	1.1%	1.8%
Inuk (Inuit)	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Multiple Indigenous responses	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Indigenous responses not included elsewhere	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%

The demographic analysis of youth in New Westminster provides critical insights that inform the development of a youth resiliency strategy. Youth aged 12 to 25 represent 14.7% of the population, slightly below regional and provincial averages but higher than the national average (Statistics Canada, 2022). Despite overall population growth in the city, the youth population has slightly declined, with notable decreases in the 18–22 age group. Living arrangements reveal that most youth reside in one- or two-parent homes, aligning closely with regional averages, though there are slightly higher rates of youth living with

relatives or alone. These factors highlight the need for programs addressing financial instability, emotional support, and accessible housing solutions for at-risk groups.

Low-income rates for youth in New Westminster (11%) are lower than regional and provincial averages but still indicate significant challenges for over a tenth of the youth population. Additionally, the city's elevated percentage of Newcomers to Canada (32%) and visible minority youth (57%) underscores the importance of culturally responsive programming to address unique risk factors like social isolation, discrimination, and access to services. Indigenous youth, while representing 4.6% of the population, face increased risk factors linked to historical and systemic barriers (Statistics Canada, 2024a). The City's sanctuary policies and commitment to Truth and Reconciliation provide a strong foundation for inclusive approaches that address the diverse needs of New Westminster's youth. These findings emphasize the need for tailored, equity-focused strategies to promote resilience and well-being across all demographics.

Youth Well-Being Indicators

Youth well-being in New Westminster reflects a complex interplay of protective and risk factors, underscoring opportunity areas to support resilience and positive development. While 83% of youth report having access to mental health services, only 62% rate their mental health as good or excellent (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). This disparity highlights potential gaps in service, suggesting a need to enhance mental health programs to address underlying issues more comprehensively. For context, 17% of youth report being unable to access the mental health services they need, a statistic that emphasizes the importance of reducing barriers such as wait times, costs, and awareness of available resources (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). In the Youth Development Instrument report, 1 in 3 youth reported a low satisfaction with their life (Samji et al., 2023) while over 1 in 4 grade 8 youth reported low levels of optimism for their future (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023).

Community connection emerges as a critical area of opportunity. Only 41% of youth feel a strong sense of belonging in their community, and 25% report lacking even one adult they can confide in outside of their families (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). Additionally, while 59% of New Westminster youth reported the presence of positive adult relationships in their lives, they remain 7% below the provincial average (66%) (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023). Positive relationships with adults are a known protective factor for youth, helping mitigate risks like social isolation, bullying, and risky behaviors. Social belonging is another important protective factor for youth. The Youth Development Instrument demonstrates that while 2 in 3 high school aged youth feel medium or high

sense of belonging in their school, 1 in 3 experience a low sense of belonging (Samji et al., 2023). Outside of the school environment, 22% of youth in the adolescent health survey shared they felt very little, or no connection to their community, while 41% shared they felt like a part of the community quite a bit, or very much (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). Connections with peers and friends is another strong protective factor for New Westminster youth. 85% of grade 8 youth felt a sense of belonging with their peers and felt they had a friend they could talk to (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023). High school students were similar as 88% felt they had at least one really good friend and 89% felt a part of a group of friends (Samji et al., 2023).

Bullying and discrimination further contribute to challenges for New Westminster youth. Social bullying, such as exclusion and gossip, affects 36% of high school aged youth (Samji et al., 2023), and 45% in the middle years (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023). Similarly, 17% of youth reported experiencing discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or skin color, while others identified physical appearance (22%) and weight (15%) as common perceived reasons (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). These issues underline the continued need for anti-bullying and inclusivity initiatives, particularly within schools and other community spaces where youth frequently interact.

While there are challenges, there are also areas of strength. Over half of the youth (52%) participate in organized extracurricular activities, a known protective factor that fosters engagement and social development, while food insecurity affects only 8% of youth, a relatively low figure that indicates progress in addressing basic needs (McCreary Centre Society, 2024). However, only 19% participate in moderate or vigorous exercise daily, highlighting an opportunity to promote physical activity as part of a holistic approach to well-being (McCreary Centre Society, 2024).

Table C2

Youth Resilience Indicators, Risk and Protective Factors. (Sources: Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023; McCreary Centre Society, 2024; Samji et al., 2023)

Indicator	Statistic	Source
Youth with access to mental health services	83%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth rating mental health as good or excellent	62%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth unable to access needed mental health services	17%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth with low satisfaction with life	29%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth with low levels of optimism for the future	23%	Samji et al., 2023
Youth feeling a strong sense of belonging in their community	41%	Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023
Youth lacking an adult to confide in outside their family	25%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth reporting positive adult relationships	59%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth feeling medium or high belonging in school	71%	Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023
Youth reporting very little or no community connection	22%	Samji et al., 2023
Youth feeling a sense of belonging with peers (Grade 8)	85%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth feeling they have at least one really good friend (High School)	88%	Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023
Youth experiencing social bullying (High School)	36%	Samji et al., 2023
Youth experiencing social bullying (Middle Years)	45%	Samji et al., 2023
Youth experiencing discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or skin color	17%	Human Early Learning Partnership, 2023
Youth identifying physical appearance as a reason for discrimination	22%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth identifying weight as a reason for discrimination	15%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth participating in organized extracurricular activities	52%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth experiencing food insecurity	8%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024
Youth participating in moderate or vigorous exercise daily	19%	McCreary Centre Society, 2024

The data on youth well-being in New Westminster highlights a community with both strengths and challenges. Protective factors such as access to services, strong peer connections, and participation in extracurricular activities provide a solid foundation for fostering resilience among youth. However, gaps in community belonging, adult mentorship, and barriers to accessing services underscore critical areas for intervention. Experiences of bullying, discrimination, and social disconnection further emphasize the importance of targeted strategies to address these vulnerabilities.

Understanding the well-being of youth not only provides valuable context for shaping prevention and support initiatives but also connects directly to broader issues of youth safety and crime. By addressing the underlying factors that contribute to risks, the

community can work toward reducing vulnerabilities that may lead to involvement in unsafe behaviors or environments. This sets the stage for a closer examination of youth crime data, which will provide additional insights into the intersection of risk factors and criminal behavior, and inform strategies for creating a safer, more inclusive community to improve youth resiliency.

New Westminster Youth Crime Analysis

Although this project is focused on a youth resilience strategy, the funding was received through the Building Safer Communities Fund and is related to reducing youth violence from guns and gangs. As such, robust crime data analysis is important for ensuring actions and strategies are aligned with the proper enforcement, intervention, or prevention levels. The following analysis contains data from public sources such as Statistics Canada (Statistics Canada, 2024) along with data shared by the NWPD (New Westminster Police Department, 2024) to provide a detailed summary of past and current crime statistics involving youth in the community.

For the context of this analysis, the existing Government of Canada definitions of criminal organizations and street gangs will be combined under the heading of "gang". A criminal organization is defined as a static or fluid group of 3 or more individuals who communicate, cooperate, and conspire within an ongoing collective or network to generate material benefits or financial gain (Government of Canada, 2024). Whereas a street gang can be defined as a semi-structured group of adolescents or young adults who use intimidation and violence to commit criminal acts of violence on a regular basis (Government of Canada, 2022).

Data Limitations

Crime data from both Statistics Canada and NWPD does have some limitations. The figures below represent police and statistical records at the time they were extracted, therefore, figures may have changed over time. Additionally, youth crime data provided represent any files (charged, or not charged) of a youth aged 12-17 that was apprehended within the jurisdiction of New Westminster. This means that youth numbers represented below may contain youth that do not reside in New Westminster, but were apprehended in New Westminster. It additionally will not contain youth interactions where files were not created. Additionally, it was not possible for this project to separate crime data of those aged 18-24 as they appear in the generalized adult statistics.

For future statistical analysis, it is recommended that location of primary residence be considered in the data analysis to fully comprehend the scope of New Westminster youth

involvement in criminal charges. It is also recommended to complete a split analysis for any youth aged 18-24. These were not possible for this report due to privacy and Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) related concerns.

Overall Youth Crime

Over the past 20 years, overall rates per 100,000 and total numbers of youth involved in criminal violations, both charged and not charged, have been in an overall decline from high points in 2007/08 as evidenced by the trendlines. There have been slight increases in total numbers and rates from 2019 onwards, however rates are still at historic low points (Statistics Canada, 2024b).

Figure C9

Total Youth Criminal Violations by Year, 2003 to 2023 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024b)
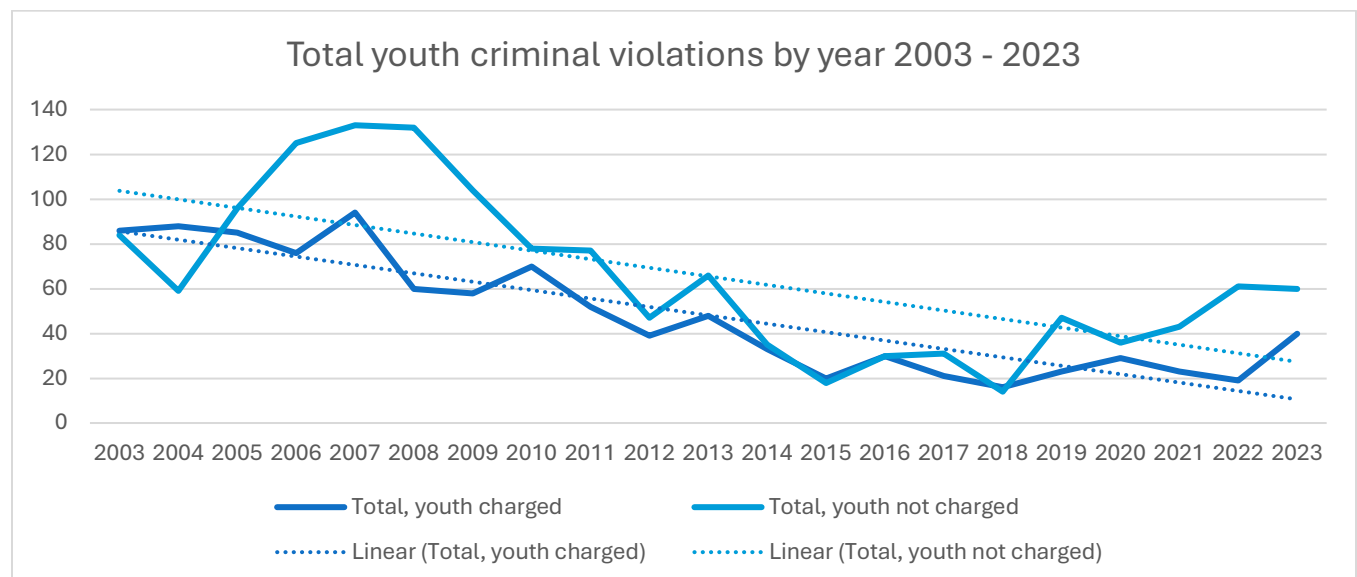
Figure C10

*Total Youth Criminal Violations (Rate per 100,000) by Year 2003 to 2023 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024b)*

Total youth criminal violations (rate per 100,000) by year 2003 - 2023

- Rate, youth charged per 100,000 population aged 12 to 17 years
- Rate, youth not charged per 100,000 population aged 12 to 17 years
- Linear (Rate, youth charged per 100,000 population aged 12 to 17 years)
- Linear (Rate, youth not charged per 100,000 population aged 12 to 17 years)
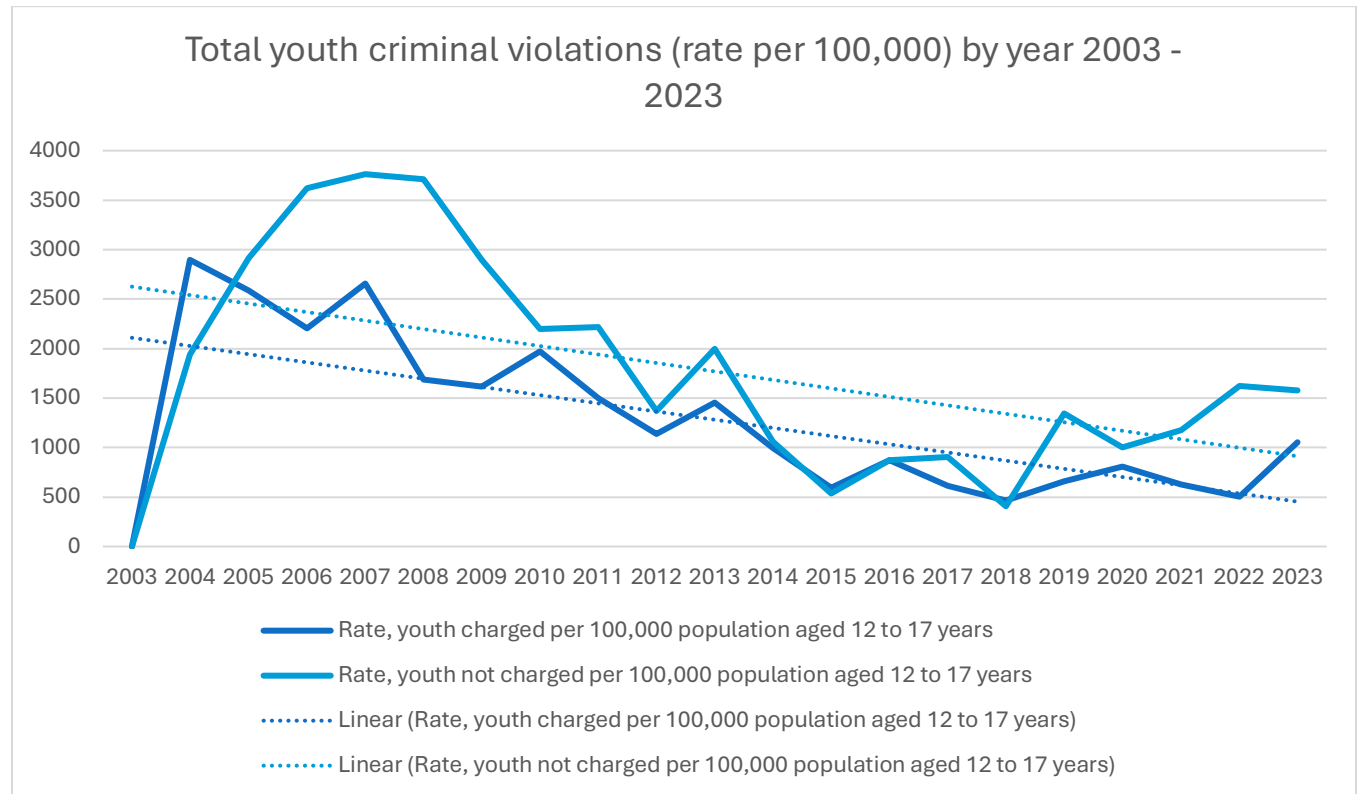
Violent Crime

As youth violence is a key factor in this analysis, a separate set of tables for youth involved violent criminal code violations was pulled from Statistics Canada. Similar to total youth criminal code violations, violent criminal code violations have been on a 20-year downward trend with a localized increase from 2019 in both youth charged and not charged (Statistics Canada, 2024b).

Figure C11

Total Youth Violent Criminal Code Violations by Year, 2003 to 2023 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024b)
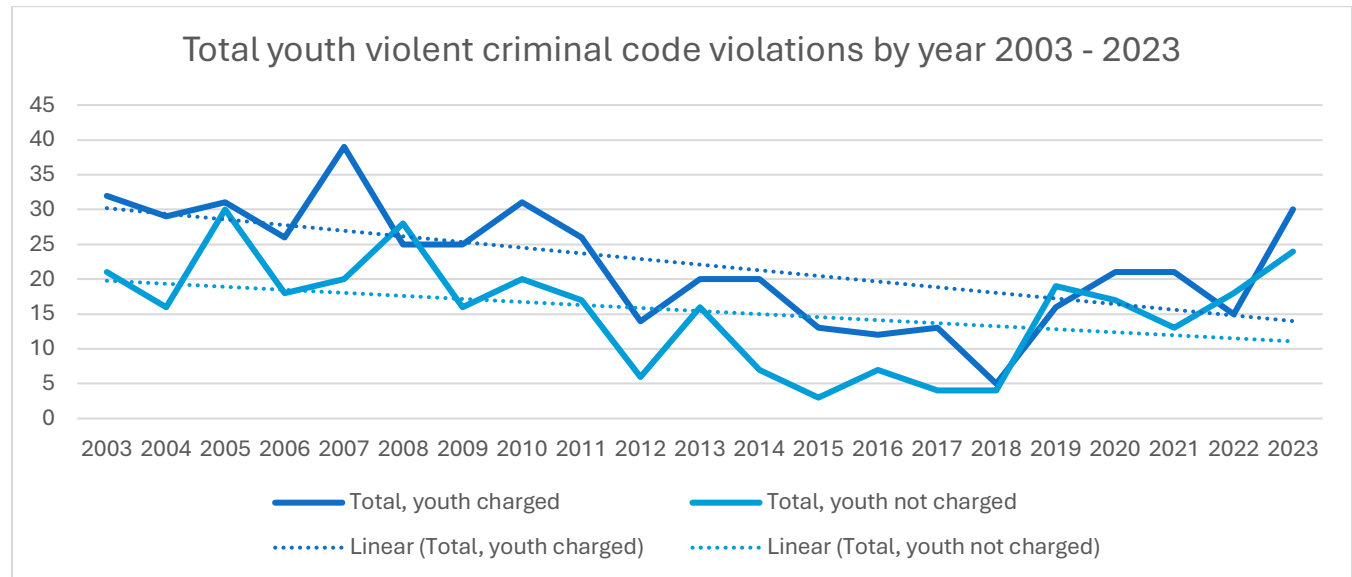
Comparatives are the overall rates per 100,000 population of youth violent criminal code violations. Similar to total numbers, the rate per 100,000 has experienced an overall annual downward trend with the localized increases from 2019 onward being visible, however the overall rate remains below historical highs (Statistics Canada, 2024b).

Figure C12

Youth Violent Criminal Code Violations (Rate per 100,000) by Year 2003 to 2023 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024b)

Youth violent criminal code violations (rate per 100,000) by year 2003 - 2023
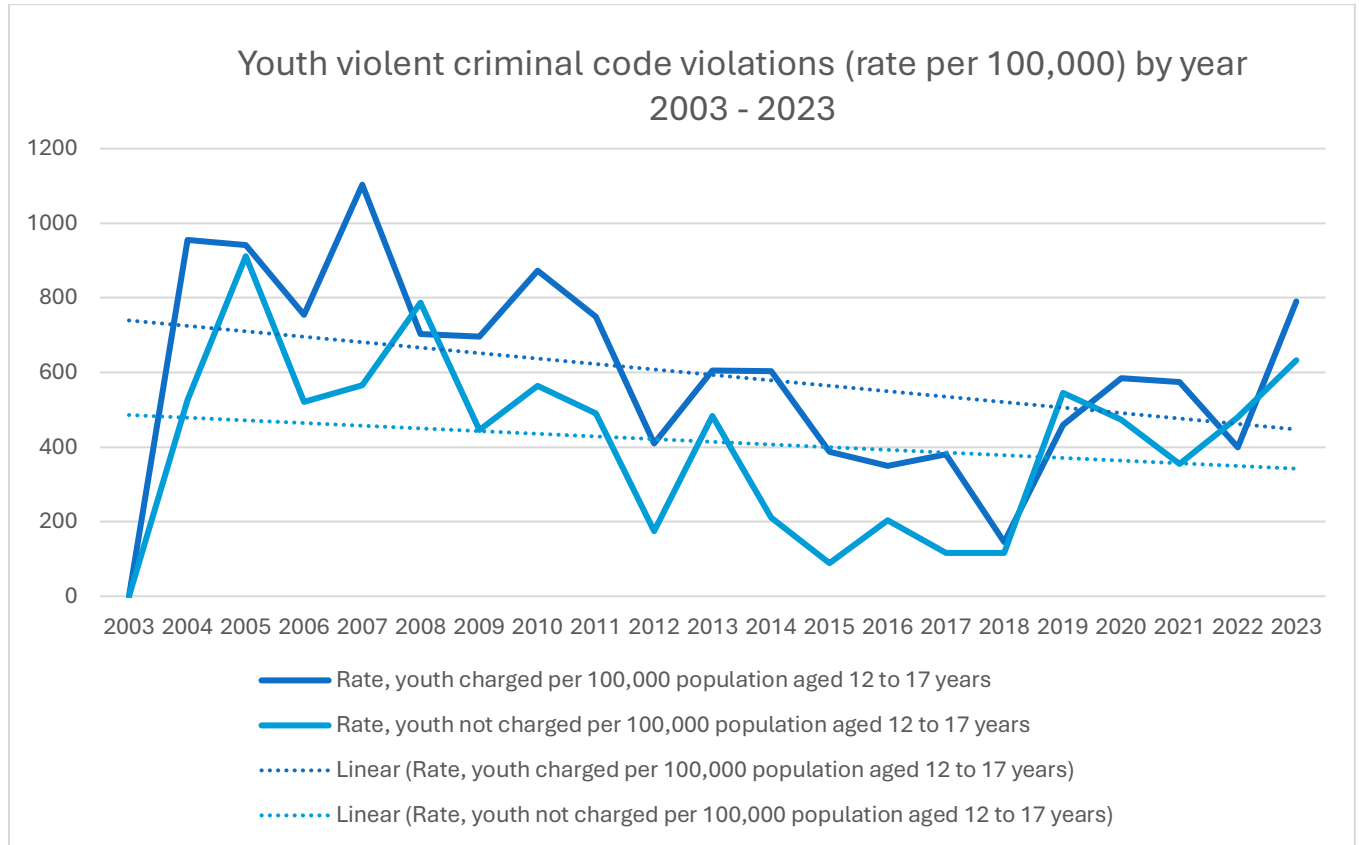
Data from NWPD demonstrate the same overall data in a 5-year period from 2019 to mid-point 2024 (data is current to June 10th, 2024). From this data, there is a decrease in 2020/2021 which is consistent with the nation-wide experience during the pandemic (New Westminster Police Department, 2024).

Figure C13

Count of Youth Crimes by Year with % Change (Source: New Westminster Police Department, 2024)

Count of Youth Crimes by Year with Percent Change
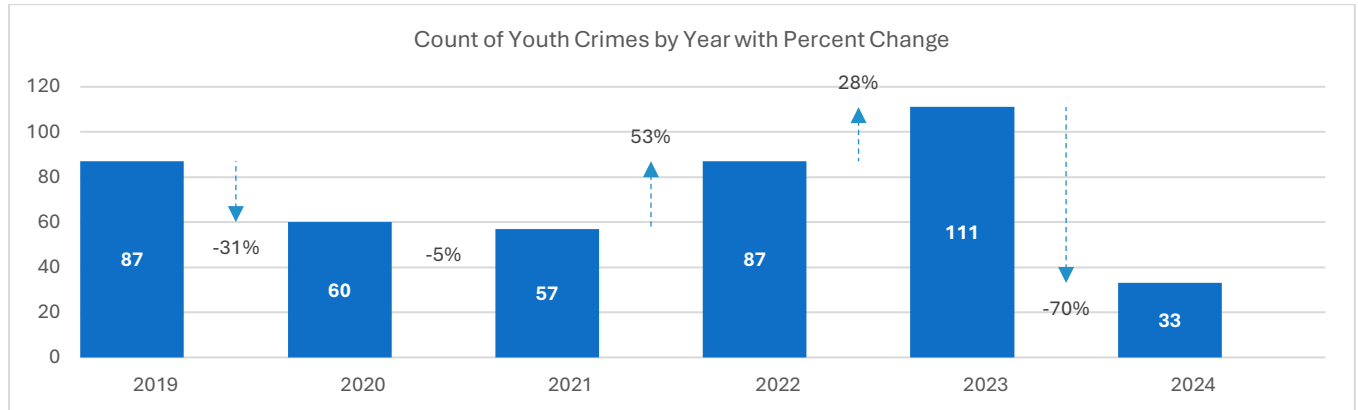
This is followed with increases in 2022 and 2023, however 2024 data projects an overall decrease at the mid-point of 2024. Data from NWPD provides insight into the top five crime types[3] from youth involved files over the last 5 years. Most common was theft-shoplifting under $5000 and 'assault-common' followed by 'assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm (CBH).' There was a notable increase in 2022 and 2023 among the top three types with projected reductions in 2024 and overall decreases from 2022 for sexual assault files and breach/bail violations (New Westminster Police Department, 2024).

Table C3

Detailed Counts of Youth Crime by Type, 2019 to 2024 (Source: New Westminster Police Department, 2024)

Crime Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Theft-shoplifting under $5000	11	9	15	25	21	9
Assault-common	17	4	6	11	21	10
Assault-w/weapon or cbh	7	5	3	11	8	3
Sexual assault	3	6	4	3	1	1
Breach/bail violations	4	2	2	4	3	2

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[3] Based on the Primary (the most severe of the four-crime type scoring) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR)

Weapons, Firearms, and Gang Related Criminal Charges

Youth files in New Westminster specifically concerning weapons, firearms, and gang related charges are important analyses for this project to ensure that emerging actions and strategies support the goals of the Building Safer Communities Fund.

Weapons violations

The numbers of total weapons violations by youth have steadily declined over a 20-year period, consistent with overall youth criminal code violations. Of note, although the number of youth charged with weapons offences has not experienced notably, the number of youth not charged has increased from 2020. This tends to indicate that diversionary programs are serving their purpose of keeping youth from criminal charges.

Figure C14

Number of Youth Total Weapons Violations by Year 2003 to 2023 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024b)
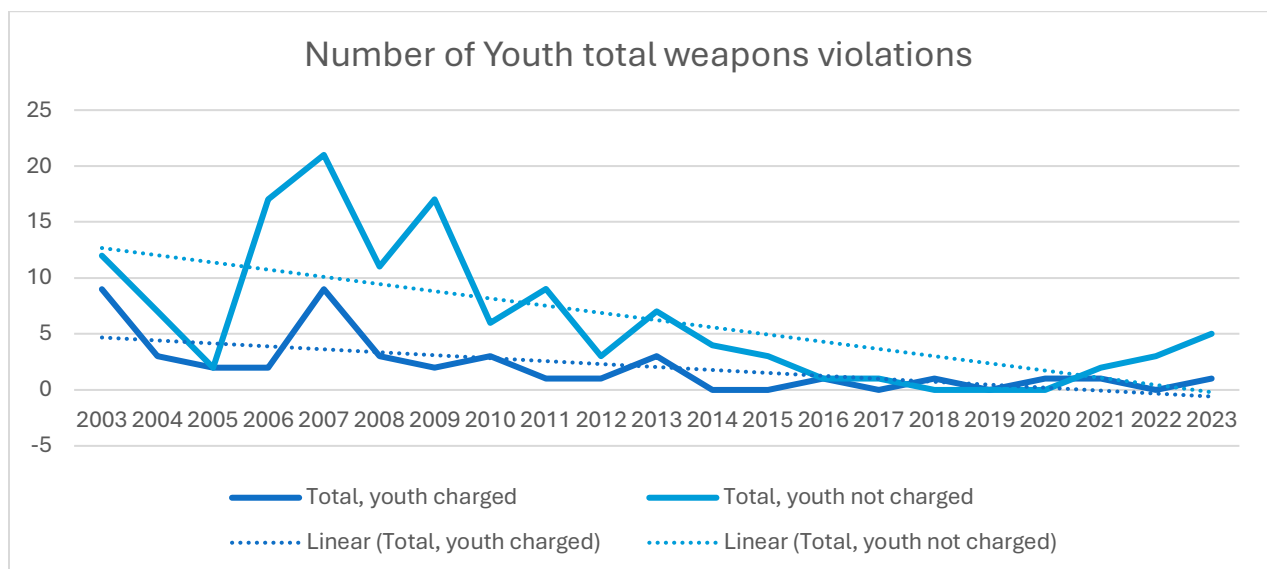
Consistent with the overall numbers are the rates per 100,000. Linear trendlines indicate that the overall number of youth charged is on a downward trend and somewhat stable as the numbers are generally low. The rate of youth not charged is also on a long-term downward trend. These numbers tend to suggest that youth criminal code violations with a weapon are generally low with some minor increases from 2020 to 2023 (Statistics Canada, 2024b).

Figure C15

Youth Total Weapons Violations (Rate per 100,000) by Year 2003 to 2023 (Source: Statistics Canada, 2024b)
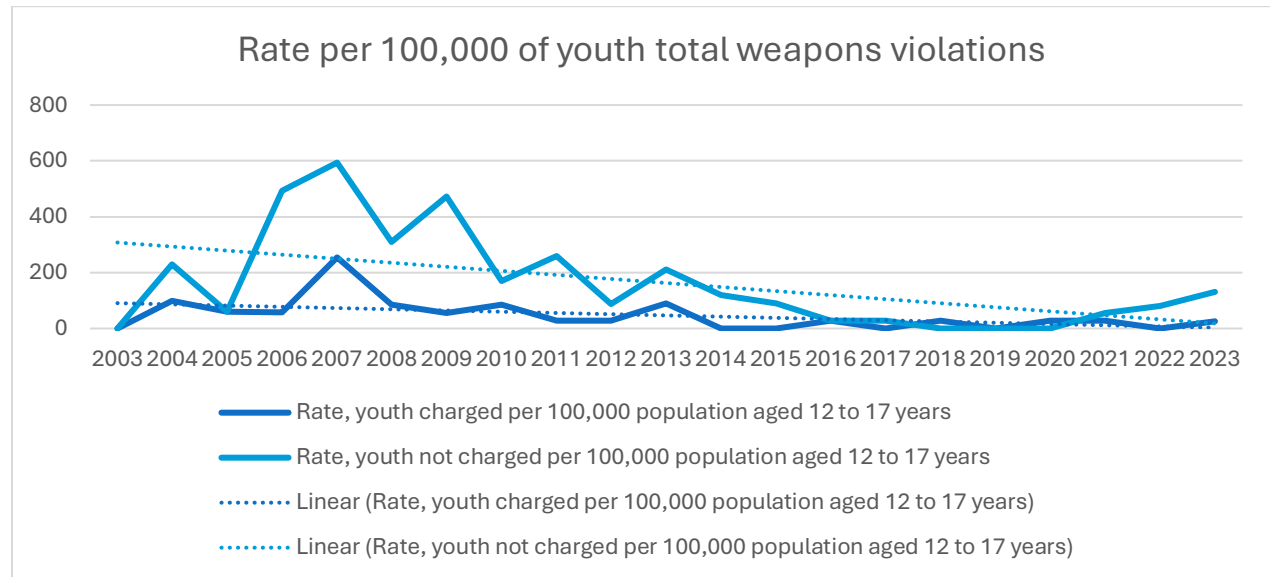
Figure C16

New Westminster Police Department Firearms/Gang Related Files by Year. (Source: New Westminster Police Department, 2024)
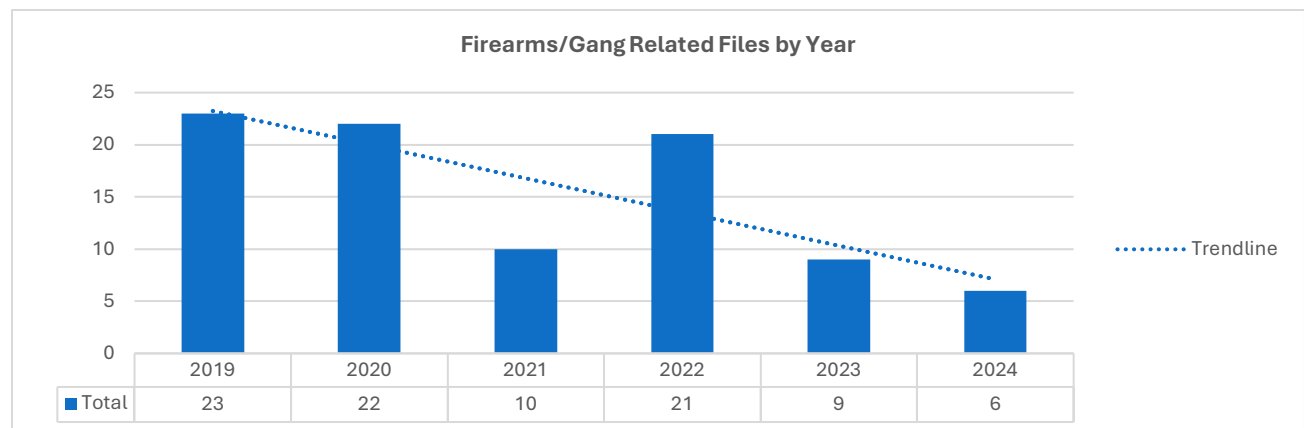
Data from NWPD[4] also demonstrates an ongoing reduction in overall firearms and gang related files over the last 5 years (New Westminster Police Department, 2024). *As it relates to firearms, there have been no youth charged or not charged with any firearms related criminal code violations in New Westminster (Statistics Canada, 2024b).*

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[4] Data includes both adult and youth offenders.

Assessment of Youth Crime Data

The data highlights an encouraging long-term decline in youth crime, including violent offenses and weapons violations, yet localized increases since 2019 underline the need for targeted prevention efforts. While youth involvement in firearms or gang-related activities remains low in New Westminster, the risks of escalation persist without proactive measures.

Importantly, the nominal increase in youth involved violent crime combined with the knowledge that gang and gun related files are reducing annually tends to suggest that current rates of youth violence in the community are not likely gang related.

Community engagement data can help provide more context to the increases in youth violence to determine the appropriate mix of intervention and prevention type strategies.

Notably, prevention strategies are vital to address underlying factors such as social disconnection, unmet needs, and economic pressures that can make youth vulnerable to violence or gang recruitment. A collaborative approach that prioritizes mentorship, community engagement, and access to supportive programs can build resilience and reduce risks, aligning with the goals of the Building Safer Communities Fund to create a safer, more inclusive environment for youth.

Appendix D: Composite Stories

To better illustrate the experiences of youth in New Westminster and the insights shared during the engagement process, we present three composite stories. These narratives are inspired by the voices and perspectives of young people and stakeholders but do not reflect any specific individual. Any resemblance to real youth is purely coincidental. These stories highlight the diversity of experiences and the interplay of protective and risk factors that shape youth resilience.

Maya's Journey to Connection

Maya, a newcomer to Canada, walks into her school every morning, feeling invisible. She hears the chatter of her classmates in a language she is still trying to master and wonders if she will ever fit in. At lunch, she often eats alone, scrolling through her phone to distract herself from the awkwardness of being by herself. Maya misses her old home, where she understood the world around her, where she belonged.

Her teachers notice her quietness but don't seem to have the time to reach out. After school, Maya heads straight home, passing vibrant parks and community centers she doesn't feel are meant for her. She hears about clubs and programs but doesn't know where to begin or if she'd even be welcome. The isolation feels heavy and she wonders how long she can keep this up.

Chris and the Need for Safety

Chris steps onto the SkyTrain, scanning the car for a seat near someone who seems safe. They clutch their backpack tightly, keeping one hand on the small canister of pepper spray they bought online. The transit ride home feels like an obstacle course; they never know who might approach them or what might happen next.

At school, Chris feels no safer. Bullying is common, and the hallways are filled with harsh words and sideways glares. Chris tries to keep their head down, avoiding the groups that seem to thrive on intimidation. But it's exhausting, and the weight of constantly being on guard starts to take a toll. Chris wonders why no one steps in to help. They think about the adults who walk past fights or ignore the bullying, and it only deepens their feeling of being alone in their struggle.

Jordan's Leadership Path

Jordan sits at the back of their classroom, their notebook filled with ideas for a mental health awareness campaign they've been dreaming about. They imagine posters in hallways, events that bring students together, and conversations that break down stigma. But the notebook stays closed most of the time. Jordan feels unsure about how to take their ideas forward.

At school, Jordan doesn't see many opportunities for students to take the lead. Teachers seem too busy, and the few clubs that exist don't feel inclusive. Jordan often wonders, *What's the point of trying if no one will listen?* They feel frustrated by the lack of spaces to connect with peers and mentors who might support their goals. Despite their doubts, the ideas in Jordan's notebook grow, waiting for a moment when they feel empowered to share them.

Liam's Search for Belonging

Liam walks home from school every day to an empty apartment. His mom works two jobs, leaving early and coming home long after he's asleep. They barely talk anymore, and when they do, it's mostly about bills or chores.

At home, no one notices him. At school, it's no different. Teachers rush past, classmates don't invite him to hang out, and his days blur together in silence. He spends most afternoons wandering the neighborhood, his hoodie pulled up, just trying to pass the time. He is being noticed by others, though their intentions are not going to support Liam on a healthy path. A stranger on the street speaks to him: "You look bored, kid." Liam hesitates, but the man grins and starts talking, treating Liam like he's someone worth noticing. Soon, Liam starts running errands for the guy and his crew. For the first time, he feels seen— important, even. Deep down, Liam knows this isn't the life he wants, but being invisible feels worse.

These stories reveal the lived experiences of many youth in New Westminster: Maya's isolation as a newcomer, Chris's vulnerability in unsafe environments, Jordan's yearning for leadership opportunities, and Liam's search for community. These experiences reflect the challenges and aspirations shared during the engagement process and provide a human lens through which to understand the strategy's priorities.

The Future of Youth Resilience in New Westminster

Maya's Journey to Connection

Today, Maya walks through the doors of her school with confidence. She's found the mentorship program that pairs newcomer youth with older students who help them navigate school and community life. Through culturally responsive programs at the local youth hub, she has found a place where she feels welcome and understood. Maya now attends workshops, volunteers at events, and even leads activities for younger newcomers.

Her teachers, trained in trauma-informed practices, reach out to check in and celebrate her progress. The once-daunting parks and community centers now feel like home, places where she meets friends and participates in programs designed to make newcomers feel like they belong. Maya reflects on how far she has come, grateful for the community that supported her journey to connection.

Chris and the Need for Safety

Chris's daily transit ride feels different now. The SkyTrain stations are staffed with visible safety ambassadors trained to assist youth, creating an environment where they feel protected. In school, restorative justice programs have helped reduce bullying, replacing harsh words and intimidation with open conversations and understanding.

Chris no longer carries pepper spray; they trust the adults and peers around them to step in when needed. They are part of a peer support group that helps students navigate challenges and build confidence. The weight of always being on guard has lifted, replaced by a sense of relief and belonging. Chris now moves through their day with a renewed sense of safety and security.

Jordan's Leadership Path

Jordan stands at the front of the school auditorium, addressing their peers during Mental Health Awareness Week, an event they helped organize. With the support of mentors and inclusive leadership programs, they were able to bring their ideas to life. The notebook that once stayed closed is now a blueprint for initiatives that have transformed their school into a space where students feel seen and heard.

Their teachers and youth workers encouraged their creativity and gave them the tools to lead. Clubs at school now reflect the diversity of student interests, providing spaces for everyone to participate and thrive. Jordan looks out at the crowd and feels proud, knowing they've not only found their place but also helped others find theirs.

Liam's Search for Belonging

A youth outreach worker notices Liam hanging around after school and invites him to check out a local recreation center where they are playing drop-in basketball. He gives Liam a free pass and they join together. Hesitant at first, Liam eventually starts to shoot some hoops, laugh with others his age, and have fun. He starts with casual activities like basketball but soon joins a leadership program where he helps organize community sport events that are free to youth and he begins to mentors younger kids.

Through the center, Liam finds a sense of belonging and purpose. He feels valued, develops new skills, and builds connections with peers and mentors. The pull of the streets fades as Liam realizes he has the power to contribute to something meaningful and positive.

The Power of a Resilient Community

Maya, Chris, Jordan, and Liam's stories reflect the transformative power of the New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy. By fostering connection, safety, and empowerment, the strategy ensures that every young person has the opportunity to thrive. These stories demonstrate how a community united in purpose can create an environment where all youth feel valued, supported, and inspired to achieve their full potential.

Appendix E: Youth Validation Survey Results

Section 1

Hey there! The City of New Westminster is working on a plan to make New West a better, safer place for local youth, aged 12-24, like you.

Since January, we've been visiting schools, including NWSS and middle schools, and holding meetings to hear from youth like you and their families. We've also talked to lots of school staff and community support workers to get a better idea of what's going on.

Now, we need **your** voice to help make things better! This survey will take about **8 -12 minutes**, and your answers will help shape the New Westminster Youth Resilience Strategy we are working to create with actions that matter—like making schools and community spaces feel safer and easier to access. Your input is key to making sure we're getting the strategy right, so thanks for being part of this!

Please know that all your answers are **completely confidential** and **anonymous**. We won't ask for your name, and we will make sure that any identifiable information you may provide will not be shared.

If you don't feel comfortable answering a question, feel free to skip it. We're just glad to hear your voice and get your feedback to help make New Westminster a safer, more supportive place for youth.

Complete the survey to enter our prize draw! We are giving away $25 gift cards to New Westminster businesses of your choice to 10 lucky participants. Follow the instructions at the end of the survey to enter to win!

For more information about the Youth Resilience Strategy, click here.

Have questions about the survey or could use support in providing your feedback? Email us at lmathias@newwestcity.ca.

This survey is for any youth living in New Westminster who are between the ages 12 and 24. Does this describe you?

129 respondents
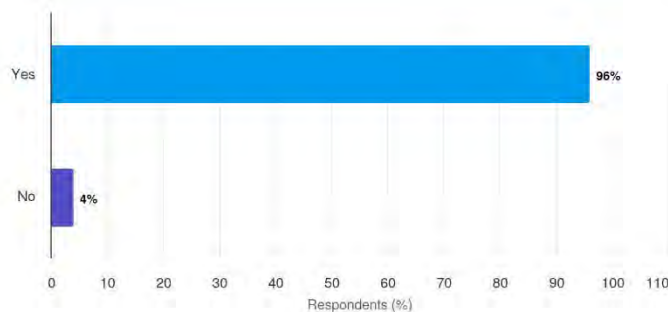
	%	Frequency
Yes	96.12%	124
No	3.88%	5
Total		129

Youth told us that safety means having caring adults who are there to help when needed, feeling free to be yourself, and not worrying about things like being catcalled on the street or bullied at school. It's about feeling secure in places like parks, bathrooms, and transit, and knowing the people around you are friendly and welcoming. It also means having places to hang out with friends and do fun activities without feeling judged or unsafe, and making sure youth voices are heard when it comes to safety. How much do you agree with this definition of safety?

103 respondents
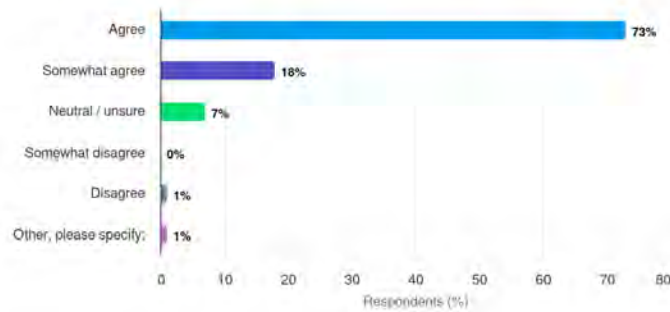
	%	Frequency	
Agree	72.82%	75	
Somewhat agree	18.45%	19	
Neutral / unsure	6.80%	7	
Somewhat disagree	0.00%	0	
Disagree	0.97%	1	
Other, please specify:	0.97%	1	
Total		103	

What Was Heard: New West youth we've talked to told us that safety doesn't always feel guaranteed—whether it's at school, in youth centers, or out in public. We're working on making these places feel safer, but we need your help to make sure we get it right in the strategy. Let us know how safe you feel and any thoughts on how things could be better. How often do you feel safe in the following places in New Westminster?

102 respondents
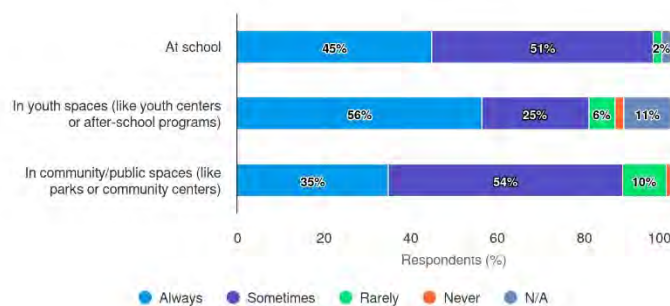
	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	N/A	Total
At school	45.10% 46	50.98% 52	1.96% 2	0% 0	1.96% 2	102
In youth spaces (like youth centers or after-school programs)	56.86% 58	24.51% 25	5.88% 6	1.96% 2	10.78% 11	102
In community/public spaces (like parks or community centers)	35.35% 35	53.54% 53	10.10% 10	1.01% 1	0% 0	99

What Was Heard: Some youth told us they've seen others carrying weapons to feel safe or have felt pressured to join risky activities. We want to better understand this and find ways to keep everyone safer. Your thoughts will help us address these issues. In the last 3 months, how often, if ever, have you or someone you know carried a weapon (like pepper spray, a knife, etc.) to help feel safe?

103 respondents
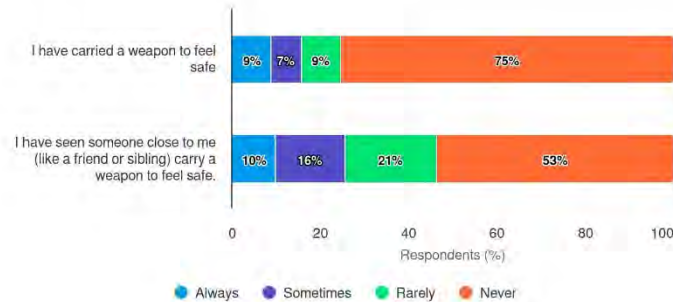
	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total
I have carried a weapon to feel safe	8.74% 9	6.80% 7	8.74% 9	75.73% 78	103
I have seen someone close to me (like a friend or sibling) carry a weapon to feel safe.	9.80% 10	15.69% 16	20.59% 21	53.92% 55	102

Have you ever felt like someone tried to get you involved in a gang or something that felt unsafe (e.g. Feeling at risk of physical harm or being involved in illegal activity)?

103 respondents
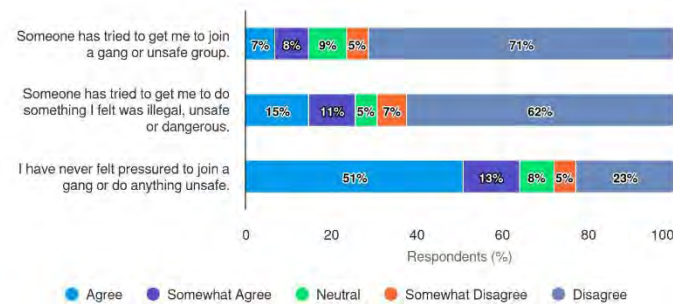
	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
Someone has tried to get me to join a gang or unsafe group.	6.80% 7	7.77% 8	8.74% 9	4.85% 5	71.84% 74	103
Someone has tried to get me to do something I felt was illegal, unsafe or dangerous.	14.56% 15	10.68% 11	4.85% 5	6.80% 7	63.11% 65	103
I have never felt pressured to join a gang or do anything unsafe.	51.49% 52	12.87% 13	7.92% 8	4.95% 5	22.77% 23	101

What Was Heard: Youth told us that having caring adults—those who are trained and empowered to step in and keep you safe—makes a big difference. We're working on making sure that adults in your spaces, like schools, youth centers, and parks, are ready and able to help when needed to support and protect you. Let us know who helps you feel safe and supported. It would help me feel safer if there were more supportive adults who are empowered or trained to intervene in these places:

103 respondents
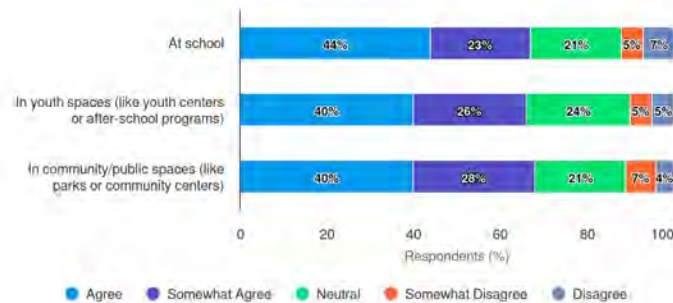
	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Total
At school	43.69% 45	23.30% 24	21.36% 22	4.85% 5	6.80% 7	103
In youth spaces (like youth centers or after-school programs)	40.20% 41	26.47% 27	23.53% 24	4.90% 5	4.90% 5	102
In community/public spaces (like parks or community centers)	40.20% 41	28.43% 29	20.59% 21	6.86% 7	3.92% 4	102

Which types of adults would help you feel safer or more supported? Select all that apply:

98 respondents
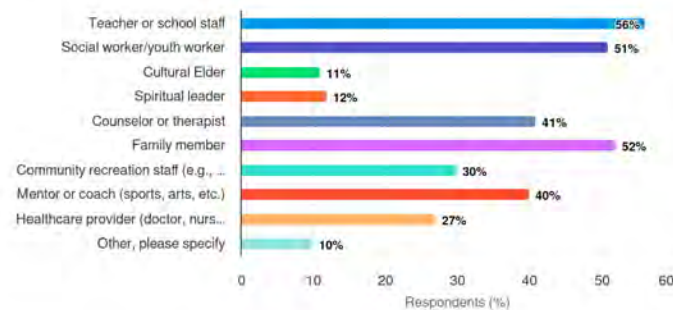
	%	Frequency
Teacher or school staff	56.12%	55
Social worker/youth worker	51.02%	50
Cultural Elder	11.22%	11
Spiritual leader	12.24%	12
Counselor or therapist	40.82%	40
Family member	52.04%	51
Community recreation staff (e.g., at youth centers or community spaces)	29.59%	29
Mentor or coach (sports, arts, etc.)	39.80%	39
Healthcare provider (doctor, nurse, etc.)	26.53%	26
Other, please specify	10.20%	10
Total		98

What Was Heard: Youth have shared that things like cost, transportation, and not knowing about programs can make it hard to join activities offered for youth. We want to make sure you can access the programs you want. Let us know what's stopping you and what programs you want. What makes it hard for you to join youth programs or recreation activities? (Select only your top 3)

99 respondents
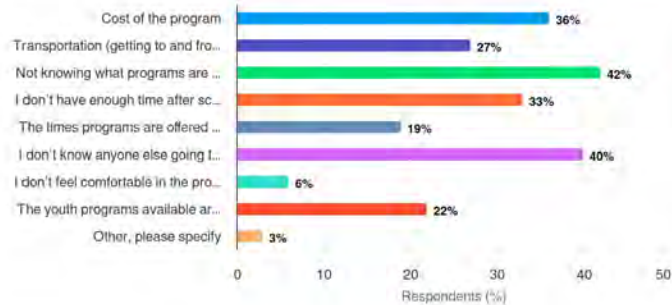
	%	Frequency
Cost of the program	36.36%	36
Transportation (getting to and from the program)	27.27%	27
Not knowing what programs are available	42.42%	42
I don't have enough time after school or on weekends	33.33%	33
The times programs are offered don't fit my schedule	19.19%	19
I don't know anyone else going to the program, and don't want to join on my own	40.40%	40
I don't feel comfortable in the program space	6.06%	6
The youth programs available are not interesting to me	22.22%	22
Other, please specify	3.03%	3
Total		99

What Was Heard: Youth in New West have shared that finding the right help when needed isn't always easy. The strategy will include actions to make it easier for you to get the support you need. Tell us what could help improve this for you and your friends. If you needed help, how confident are you that you'd know where to go or who to ask?

98 respondents
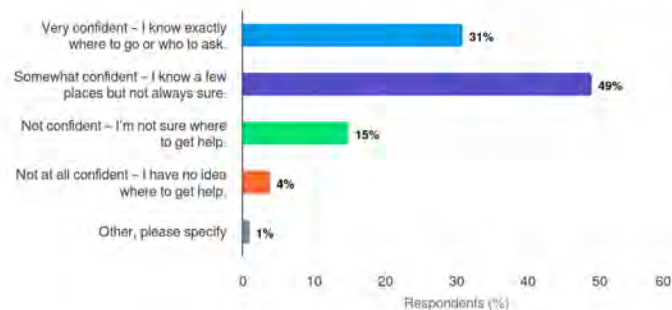
	%	Frequency
Very confident – I know exactly where to go or who to ask.	30.61%	30
Somewhat confident – I know a few places but not always sure.	48.98%	48
Not confident – I'm not sure where to get help.	15.31%	15
Not at all confident – I have no idea where to get help.	4.08%	4
Other, please specify	1.02%	1
Total		98

What makes it difficult for you to find help when you need it? Select all that apply:

91 respondents
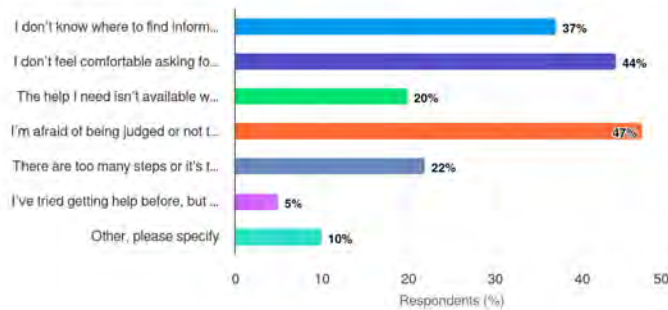
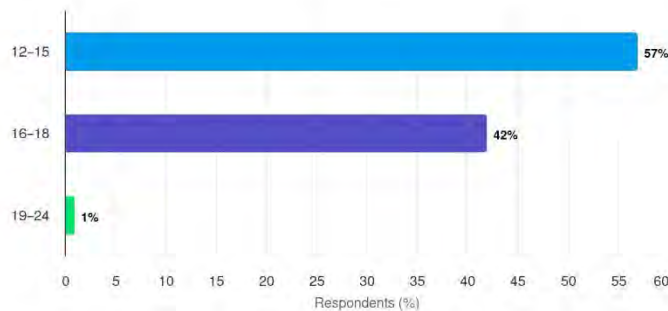|	%	Frequency
I don't know where to find information about programs or services.	37.36%	34
I don't feel comfortable asking for help.	43.96%	40
The help I need isn't available when I need it (e.g., evenings, weekends; there are wait times, etc.).	19.78%	18
I'm afraid of being judged or not taken seriously.	47.25%	43
There are too many steps or it's too complicated to access help.	21.98%	20
I've tried getting help before, but it didn't work out.	5.49%	5
Other, please specify	9.89%	9
Total		91

We're asking a few questions about your age, gender, and other things to help us understand who is filling out this survey. This helps us make sure we hear from all kinds of youth in New Westminster. Your answers will stay anonymous, and they'll help us see if there are differences in what youth are experiencing across various identities. Remember, you can skip any question you're not comfortable answering. How old are you?
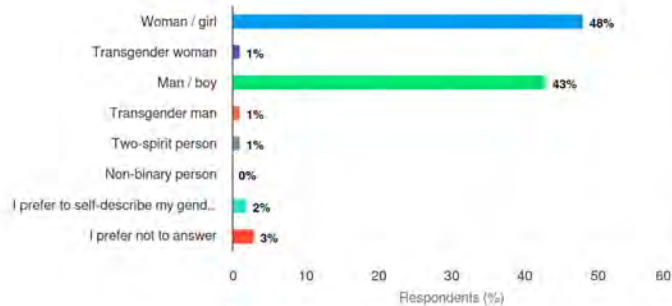
97 respondents

	%	Frequency
12–15	56.70%	55
16–18	42.27%	41
19–24	1.03%	1
Total		97

Which category best describes your gender? We are asking this question to understand how safety affects people across various identities. If you feel comfortable answering, please select the option that best describes your gender identity:

97 respondents

	%	Frequency
Woman / girl	48.45%	47
Transgender woman	1.03%	1
Man / boy	43.30%	42
Transgender man	1.03%	1
Two-spirit person	1.03%	1
Non-binary person	0.00%	0
I prefer to self-describe my gender as	2.06%	2
I prefer not to answer	3.09%	3
Total		97

Do you identify as First Nations (status or non-status), Metis, or Inuk (Inuit)? Indigenous identity in Canada refers to people who are: - First Nations (North American Indian), Metis, or Inuk (Inuit), and/or - Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the Indian Act of Canada), and/or - Those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian Band

96 respondents
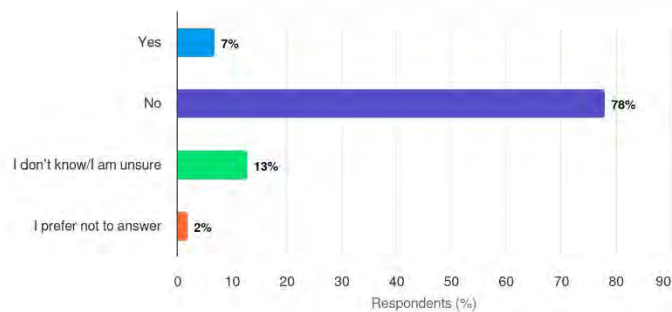
	%	Frequency
Yes	7.29%	7
No	78.13%	75
I don't know/I am unsure	12.50%	12
I prefer not to answer	2.08%	2
Total		96

Are you a newcomer to Canada? Newcomers may include refugees, landed immigrants, permanent residents, and people in the process of becoming Canadian citizens. Landed immigrants or permanent residents are persons who have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by Canadian immigration authorities. (BC Statistics)
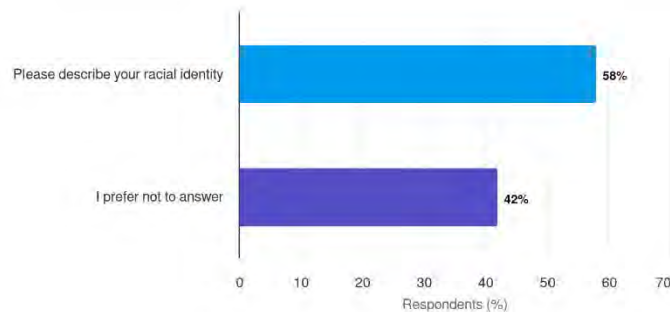
97 respondents
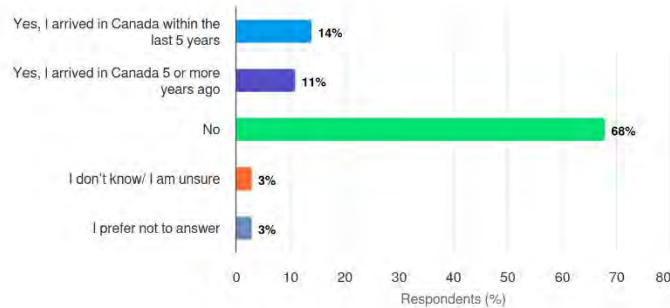
	%	Frequency	
Yes, I arrived in Canada within the last 5 years	14.43%	14	
Yes, I arrived in Canada 5 or more years ago	11.34%	11	
No	68.04%	66	
I don't know/ I am unsure	3.09%	3	
I prefer not to answer	3.09%	3	
Total		97	

How would you describe your racial identity? Racial categories are not based in science. There is no agreement on how race is categorized. A person's racial identity may influence the way they are treated by individuals and institutions. (BC Statistics)
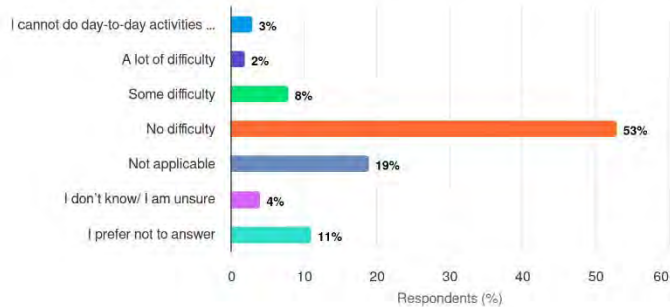
84 respondents

	%	Frequency	
Please describe your racial identity	58.33%	49	
I prefer not to answer	41.67%	35	
Total		84	

Do you have any difficulty with day-to-day activities, either because of a disability or because of disability-related barriers

95 respondents

	%	Frequency	
I cannot do day-to-day activities at all	3.16%	3	
A lot of difficulty	2.11%	2	
Some difficulty	8.42%	8	
No difficulty	52.63%	50	
Not applicable	18.95%	18	
I don't know/ I am unsure	4.21%	4	
I prefer not to answer	10.53%	10	
Total		95	

Are you attending school in New Westminster

95 respondents
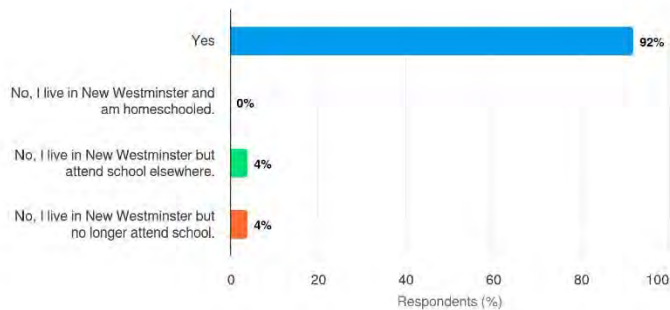
	%	Frequency	
Yes	91.58%	87	
No, I live in New Westminster and am homeschooled.	0.00%	0	
No, I live in New Westminster but attend school elsewhere.	4.21%	4	
No, I live in New Westminster but no longer attend school.	4.21%	4	
Total		95	

Appendix F: What We are Hearing Report

WHAT WE ARE HEARING

YOUTH RESILIENCY STRATEGY
MAY 2024

New Westminster is a community that is "growing up" in many ways – quite obviously as a growing population center – however it is far more than that. New Westminster is taking a leadership role in building a community with high levels of well-being embodied within its inclusive values.

As such, the City of New Westminster is working towards a *Youth Resiliency Strategy* to support youth growing up in New Westminster so they feel safe, have valuable ways to contribute, and thrive.

Resiliency is the ability and capacity of an individual to cope with and adapt to challenges, as well as their ability to bounce back from difficult experiences. Resiliency for youth is highly influenced by factors such as the sense of belonging, social connection, emotional health, a sense of meaning, positive identity, goals and aspirations, individual culture, and the presence of positive opportunities.

Crucial to all these elements is a sense of safety; if youth feel safe in their community, their opportunities to maximize these factors increase, which builds the conditions where youth thrive.

Components of resiliency

Family and Friends

Individuals

Culture

Community and Local Environment

Understanding resiliency

Resiliency is the capacity to cope with and adapt to challenges, as well as the ability to bounce back from difficult experiences.
(Crooks et al., 2020)

Building on strengths

New West youth have a wide range of community assets that currently support their well-being and development. During a community asset mapping workshop in April 2024, over 80 existing community support assets were identified that support youth resiliency through:
- connecting youth to their community and local environment,
- supporting individual youth,
- bringing friends and families together, and
- supporting youth through expressing culture and identity.

These four components of youth resiliency are vitally important in building the community conditions where youth can thrive. Youth shared their appreciation for the support they receive across these domains and recognized the hard work and mentorship that is provided to them by caring adults in the community.

While there are a significant number of community assets for youth, youth and community members also shared there are challenges facing youth that are emerging in the community in several ways. It is important to note that these two things can be true simultaneously – there is amazing support for youth and youth are experiencing challenges causing turbulence in their lives; these are the growing pains of resiliency and well-being.

Emerging Themes

Just as the Fraser River's turbulent waters have shaped the land on which New Westminster exists – there appear to be some turbulent elements of life in the city that are occurring 'below the surface' for youth in New Westminster.

These elements seem to be heavily shaping the lived experiences of youth. The emerging themes represent an early understanding of elements that will shape this project going forward. Some are visible while others are less so, occurring below the surface, and deserving of deeper exploration.

People and place-based safety

Youth shared concerns about particular locations throughout the City where they felt less safe. These concerns were sometimes related to the presence of other people, the behaviour of others, or the physical location itself. It will be important to continue to learn about certain areas that feel less safe for youth and to understand what contributes to feelings of security.

Additionally, young women and gender diverse youth expressed concern about their interactions with other community members, and the notable gendered difference in harassment for example, and how that impacted their perception of safety. Both youth and service providers shared concerns about the perception of youth violence amongst the wider community, due to a range of factors including social media.

Still some questions remaining...

Youth are reporting feeling unsafe in some areas and are having challenging interactions with some community members potentially causing a reduction of emotional health and sense of connection within their communities. To know more, we intend to inquire about these

WHAT WE ARE HEARING
YOUTH RESILIENCY STRATEGY
MAY 2024

interactions and the impact they are having to identify common themes or experiences.

We also intend to explore the reported worsening of youth violence within New Westminster as youth crime statistics tend to report that youth violence or crime is trending downwards year over year, indicating a discrepancy that is important to understand.

Safe spaces for youth

Youth and community had a shared call for increasing the availability of safe spaces for youth both during school and after school hours. Youth shared a strong desire for the increase of violence and crime prevention programming in schools and during after school hours to help increase a sense of safety from violence and "grooming" type activities by other youth involved in high-risk activities.

Youth and community members shared that capacity challenges at the high school have led to a decrease in quiet and calming spaces for youth, resulting in challenges of personal anxiety and fear. Additionally, the lack of space has reduced the opportunities for positive youth programming in the school provided by youth workers and other community partners.

The increase of community recreation space provided by the new təməsew̓txʷ Aquatic and Community Centre are welcomed additions for the City's youth. Youth and community members provided feedback around the need for more accessible recreation space for youth including gymnasiums for basketball and other court sports, as well as lower-cost and accessible options for weight training and regular physical fitness.

Questions for deeper exploration...

Youth report feeling "tight" or withdrawn with the density and fullness of their lives and we want to understand this more deeply to see how density is affecting the elements of resiliency and the experience of growing up in New West.

We are interested to know if this is a common experience across cultural groups and how it might be showing up differently for various cohorts.

WHAT WE ARE HEARING
YOUTH RESILIENCY STRATEGY
MAY 2024

Creating waves
A deep desire for feeling safe

In New Westminster, some youth shared that they feel compelled to carry self-defense items they perceive will increase their safety. This can become a rapidly growing whirlpool; the more youth that carry these items, the more likely other youth will follow suit out of a perceived (and/or real) necessity; the more youth protecting themselves in these ways, the more likely a negative result could occur.

Some youth appear to be acting out of a personal need for safety – not a desire to cause harm. This is vitally important as it informs the next stages of the project – bridging vulnerability into protective factors.

What does this mean moving forward?

We heard that youth are taking action by creating their own sense of safety by carrying self-defense items. We want to explore the extent to which this phenomenon affects youth, including understanding the vulnerability factors that increase their likelihood of resorting to self-protection **and** the protective factors that increase their feelings of safety to reduce the need for self-protection.

The New Westminster Youth Resiliency Strategy is at a critical junction that needs community voice. On June 3rd and 4th a series of community design labs will be held across the community to bring a wide range of voices and experiences together to plan the way forward – and we hope you will be involved.

What's next?

Bridging vulnerability into protective factors

When there is turbulence below, waves emerge at the surface of the river. The same can be said for a youth growing up. The more turbulence, the more likely waves and whirlpools emerge in their lives.

While there are numerous assets in the community offering protective factors to keep youth safe, the number of risk factors that threaten to erode youth safety will continue to rise as the community grows.

Youth in New Westminster, and the community, have a shared desire to move from fear and apprehension into safety and engagement. The way forward is through community led planning and action to develop a Youth Resiliency Strategy. This strategy will focus on resiliency factors designed to help increase the sense of belonging, social connection, emotional health, sense of meaning, positive identity, goals and aspirations, individual culture, and the presence of positive opportunities for all youth in New West.

NEW WESTMINSTER
YOUTH RESILIENCY STRATEGY

For more information, contact:
Lauren at lmathias@newwestcity.ca

or visit:
https://www.newwestcity.ca/building-safer-communities-fund-program

Appendix G – Strategies At A Glance

Appendix F – Strategies At-A-Glance

Pillar 1 - Empowering Youth Leadership							

Strategic Recommendation	Key Actions	Municipal Role	Term			Outcome
			Short	Medium	Ongoing	
Seek Innovative and Informal Ways to Increase Youth Voice and Engagement Across Municipal Engagement Projects	Ensure that all municipal plans involve specific youth engagement strategies that lower barriers to participation for youth including language interpretation, going to where youth are (schools, youth centres, recreation facilities, etc.), and ensuring plain language that is easy to understand.	Convening, Service Delivery, Leading by Example,	■			Youth are regularly and meaningfully engaged in City decision-making through accessible, low-barrier engagement methods that reflect their diverse communication needs and lived realities.
Explore long-term opportunities to formalize civic leadership opportunities for youth.	Engage an internal City working group to identify immediate, medium, and long-term opportunities for youth civic leadership including committee opportunities or council type structures.	Planning & Regulating, Capacity Building, Leading by Example		■		Youth have sustained, structured opportunities to lead and influence civic decisions through formal roles in committees, councils, and other leadership bodies.

Pillar 2 - Trusted Adults & Positive Relationships

Strategic Recommendation	Key Actions	Municipal Role	Term			Outcome
			Short	Medium	Ongoing	
Build Community Capacity Through Targeted Investment and Action	Provide training in trauma-informed care, non-violent intervention, and culturally relevant mentoring for adults working with youth. Expand partnerships between schools, community organizations, and local service providers to ensure coordinated adult support networks. Train adults who interact with youth in non-violent intervention and bystander strategies to create safe, supportive environments Offer ongoing professional development to adults working with youth to improve their capacity to address the unique needs of at-risk youth Create mentorship opportunities for adults to build positive, trusting relationships with youth, particularly in school and community settings	Capacity Building, Education, Convening, Advocating	🟩	🟨		Adults in schools, organizations, and community settings are better equipped and more connected across sectors to support youth through coordinated, trauma-informed, and inclusive approaches.
Expand Access to and Use of Restorative Justice Practices	Developing and expanding restorative justice programs that focus on safety and accountability, particularly for youth offenders. Utilizing community development models to create culturally informed restorative justice interventions. Offering restorative justice training for youth workers, educators, and community leaders to support their use of these practices.	Capacity building, Convening, Coordinating, Advocacy		🟨	🟥	Youth who cause or experience harm are supported through culturally informed restorative processes that focus on healing, accountability, and strengthened community connections.

Pillar 3 - Youth Access to Programs, Supports, and Services

Strategic Recommendation	Key Actions	Municipal Role	Term			Outcome
			Short	Medium	Ongoing	
Identify Barriers and Gaps Experienced by New Westminster Youth	Engage youth and families to identify access barriers Analyze participation trends and demographics Ensure tear-round access for all age groups	Monitoring & Researching, Partnering, Capacity Building, Convening	🟩			Programs and services are informed by current, localized data on youth needs and barriers, ensuring equitable participation.
Reduce or Eliminate Barriers to Youth Access	Expand fee and transit assistance Improve marketing and visibility of programs Co-design outreach with youth to reduce stigma	Investing, Planning & Regulating, Service Delivery		🟨		Youth participation increases as financial, transportation, and stigma-related barriers are removed through inclusive policy, communication, and supports.
Invest in Social and Recreation Prescription for Youth	Pilot prescription-based referrals to recreation, arts, and volunteering Partner with schools and healthcare to implement the system	Convening, Coordinating, Education, Capacity Building		🟨	🟥	Youth are referred to supportive, non-clinical resources that build belonging and well-being, with stronger integration between recreation, health, and education.
Build Capacity for Program and Policy Design	Deliver targeted training for City and partner organization staff on GBA+ and IBPA frameworks. Integrate equity assessments into program design, evaluation, and funding processes to identify and address systemic exclusion. Create cross-sector communities of practice. Embed inclusive design protocols in service contracts and partnership agreements.	Capacity Building, Education, Planning & Regulating		🟨		Service providers apply GBA+ and IBPA to design equitable and inclusive programs, resulting in more accessible, culturally relevant, and impactful youth services.

Pillar 4 - Coordinated Systems for Safety & Intervention

Strategic Recommendation	Key Actions	Municipal Role	Term			Outcome
			Short	Medium	Long	
Explore and position the Municipality to lead and convene systems level coordination for the youth resilience strategy.	Form Youth Systems Leadership Team Develop data/resource sharing protocols Establish centralized communication strategy	Convene, Capacity Building, Coordinating, Partnering, Planning/Regulating		■		Cross-sectoral partners collaborate strategically and share data to align youth resilience efforts, resulting in more coordinated services and better tracking of trend
Explore the formation of a short-term action committee to improve non-policing intervention systems for youth.	Create a temporary multi-stakeholder group to design non-policing interventions Ensure youth and service providers are part of design process	Convene, Coordinate, Advocating, Monitoring/Research	■			A clear, community-endorsed pathway for non-policing youth interventions is established, improving access to early supports and reducing reliance on enforcement.
Consider the establishment of a Youth Social Development position at the City of New Westminster	Hire a staff member to lead youth social development Coordinate youth-serving stakeholders Facilitate meetings and promote best practices	Investing, Service Delivery, Coordinating, Capacity Building	■		■	The City strengthens its leadership in youth resilience by sustaining a dedicated staff role that builds sector capacity, connects stakeholders, and drives implementation.