



VOICES

A Study of Youth in Peel



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Thank you to the many partners who made this report possible. We are especially grateful to all the young people in Peel who took the time to share their thoughts, ideas and aspirations with us. This includes the 2,187 high school students who took part in the survey and the 149 youth who participated in the 16 focus groups that were held. It is their experiences and insights that make this report so valuable.

None of this work would have been possible without the active support of our collaborative partners at the Peel District School Board and Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board whose research staff were instrumental in the design, execution and data analysis. Special thanks to those organizations (see a full list in the online appendix) that helped to arrange focus groups with young people whose special circumstances might not have been captured otherwise.

The young people who serve on PCYI's Youth Advisory Council (YAC) have also played a critical role in the production of this report, including survey distribution, data analysis and in the development of conclusions and recommendations that would reflect the actual interests of youth. PCYI is committed to ensuring the genuine voice of youth voice is included in everything we do, and our YAC members are a big part of this ongoing effort.

Professional research assistance was also provided by the members of PCYI's Research and Evaluation Resource Group, who focused their expertise on the data and statistical analysis that informs the core of this report. This unique blend of skills really does ensure PCYI has the ability to conduct high quality, reliable research at a local level.

It is important to recognize the tremendous work and commitments already being made to support and engage young people by many of Peel's youth serving organizations and particularly the Recreation Departments and staff with the Cities of Mississauga and Brampton and the Town of Caledon. We hope this study will further inform their efforts and help to engage new collaborative community partners.

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In collaboration with our partners, the Peel Children and Youth Initiative (PCYI) has conducted extensive research in Peel Region to better understand the preferences and attitudes of young people regarding their participation in recreational activities. The research was designed to inform PCYI's 2013 report "Peel's Kids Participate" – a comprehensive long term Recreation and After School Strategy (RASS) for the Region of Peel, and was instrumental in the development of its recommendations.

Hearing directly from youth across the region helps us to better understand how they are spending their time, what prevents them from participating, and more importantly, the kinds of things that youth would like to do by way of healthy recreation and developmental activities. We believe that the actual ideas and interests of youth, and the constraints they face, have important implications for program planning and will help inform the many community partners who are interested in working more effectively with Peel's youth.

The research strategy included a large randomized survey of 2,187 high school students, along with 16 focus groups with 149 youth, whose experiences might not be reflected by the averages. The data allows us to understand exactly what types of activities – good and bad – that youth are participating in; what they would actually like to do; how they prefer to hear about activities; and the real world barriers they face to greater participation. Understanding that youth in Peel are quite diverse, the data demonstrates the many differences between and among young people based on factors like their gender, age and family composition. Where it was informative, the effects of ethnicity and immigration status are presented – critical information for service providers in Peel.

A summary of the Research Methods is provided in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 and the findings of the report are organized into six key themes explored in Sections 4.1 to 4.6.

4.1 What are the current levels of participation for youth in after school activities?

This section presents an overview of the engagement levels of youth, both in terms of the specific things they do after school and by similar types or categories of activities, and explores how this differs by their demographic characteristics (e.g. who is doing what?).

With some exceptions we find that participation in recreation and after school activities increases steadily as youth get older and that girls participate – and would like to participate – in more activities than boys. In terms of their regular after school activities, youth tell us they spend time with friends (69%); looking after siblings (24%); playing sports at school (22%); working for pay (33%); going to programs at community centres (23%); volunteering (28%); and participating in a range of non-athletic school based clubs (28%). Not all youth are the same, so we see some marked differences in the types of activities that youth participate in based on their gender, grade (age), and to a lesser extent, their ethnicity.

For example, girls from African, European and multi-ethnic families have very high participation rates, particularly as they get older, and there seems little evidence that females have a more difficult time engaging in activities than males do. That said, all youth spend more time socializing with friends (in person and online) than any other activity – and less than one in three are participating in recreational programs that involve physical activity.

4.2 How do young people spend their out-of-school time on a typical school day?

This section explores how youth in Peel will typically spend their time during a regular school day to give us a better sense of what they are actually doing. Overall, youth tell us they spend at least an hour of each day surfing the internet (64%); watching TV and movies (55%); hanging out with friends (50%); chatting with friends on the phone or by text (49%); and doing homework (43%). The data demonstrates however that there are a number of interesting differences in how certain types of youth will spend their time and these are influenced by their gender, their age (grade), their immigration status and family type.

For example, youth that are newcomers tend to spend more of their time each day doing homework and volunteering, and are less likely to spend time socializing (in person or by phone) than their Canadian born peers. Girls tell us they are much more likely than boys to spend time studying or doing homework, volunteering, working part time and providing sibling care, but are also far more likely to go shopping or talk on the phone with friends. Males spend much more time playing video games and are more likely to be involved in traditional recreational programs that include some level of physical activity. That said, male and female youth are just as likely to have a nap as they are to engage in any kind of physical activity – moderate or intense.

While there are some significant differences between and among youth, in general terms they tell us they are quite busy during an average weekday, but still manage to make social interaction with friends a priority.

4.3 What are the activities that youth would like to participate in more often?

This section provides some important insights for funders, policy makers, program providers and other community partners as it accurately reflects the voice of youth and identifies the sorts of activities that are, and would be, of interest to them. This is particularly important if we hope to engage greater numbers of young people in constructive recreational activities during out of school time.

From what youth tell us, there is a significant disconnect between many of their specific interests and the sorts of programs and activities that are most readily available in Peel. For example, the number one interest of all students was learning to cook (60%); followed by opportunities to learn more about music (48%); participate in sports (46%); undertake internships (43%); attend or participate in fine arts (39%); and chances to learn about careers and postsecondary opportunities (43%). While the data shows some interesting differences primarily based on gender, there is considerable consensus among youth in Peel that these are the sorts of opportunities that do reflect their current interests and preferences for out of school time activities.

4.4 Which sorts of barriers do youth face in terms of participation?

This section builds on our knowledge of what would interest youth and how they spend their time by examining the kinds of things that prevent them from participating or engaging in healthy recreational activities during the after school period. Understanding the specific barriers facing youth in Peel is a critical component of good program planning.

Young people from across Peel tell us that the principle reasons they are unable to participate in recreational and after school

activities includes having too much school work (53%); finding the timing of programs inconvenient (48%); having too many responsibilities at home (30%); finding nothing available that interests them (28%); and the usual issue in a Region of this size – problems with transportation (28%). Despite the incredible diversity of our young people, with a few exceptions, girls and boys both tell us that issues related to cultural differences, challenges with language and parents forbidding their participation present relatively small barriers to their engagement. As students get older, other responsibilities like volunteering, sibling care and part time work tend to prevent their participation. The data does suggest that barriers to participation differ between and among different sorts of youth and that gender, ethnicity and family composition play a role. For example, older girls in particular find existing time commitments to be a more significant barrier than boys do; youth from South Asian, East Asian, West Asian and Arab backgrounds are more likely to be doing homework and young people from single parent families will be slightly less able to participate for a number of different reasons.

4.5 How do young people communicate and hear about opportunities to participate?

A critical part of engaging youth more effectively comes from understanding how they find out – and how they would like to find out – about recreational and developmental activities that might be available to them after school. In this section youth tell us how, and how best, to let them know about opportunities to get engaged.

Youth in high school tell us there is a gap between the methods we commonly use to promote activities and programs available to them, and the channels they would prefer to use. While youth most commonly rely on friends (84%), school (79%),

teachers (46%) and social media (42%) to learn about opportunities, there is interest in using more social media methods – rather than looking at web sites – to communicate about what is going on. Not surprising perhaps as the participation of friends is a factor when it comes to whether or not youth will get involved.

What we also discover is that all students, but particularly boys, still rely on their schools and teachers as a primary and trusted source of information about what they can do during out of school time.

4.6 What sorts of 'risky behaviours' are youth engaged in and to what extent?

While the majority of this research has focussed on the more constructive recreational and social activities of young people, this section explores their involvement in "risky behaviours". This includes data on how many, and how frequently, youth use tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs and how often they are engaged in sexual activity, fighting with classmates or parents and skipping classes. The data also demonstrates how a young person's level of participation and the types of activities they participate in are related – positively and negatively – to how likely they are to engage in these sorts of behaviours.

It is important to recognize there are significant numbers of young people who are not reporting, or are unwilling to report, engaging in any risky behaviours, so the findings look primarily at those students who do. Here again we find there are differences between and among youth influenced primarily by their age (grade), gender and, to a lesser extent, their ethnicity. For example, the older a student gets the more likely they are to engage in risky behaviours but this is more common among boys than girls and particularly young men who were born in

Canada. While there are some relationships between participation in risky behaviours, the specific types of activities and how frequently youth participate, the popular notion that keeping young people busy in a wide range of activities will reduce this likelihood is not supported by the data.

We do see a very strong association between youth that report a lot of "screen time" (4 hours a day) and the likelihood of their participating in quite a number of risky behaviours. That said, we do find that youth who participate frequently in activities held at religious / cultural organizations and those who participate in personal development activities – like special classes or tutoring – are significantly less likely to get involved in several of the risky behaviours we looked at.

5.0 Discussion, Conclusions and Opportunities

This section is used to discuss the implications of what young people in the Region of Peel have told us about their experiences, their challenges and their interests and how these affect their levels of engagement in healthy recreational and developmental opportunities during out of school time. While we have avoided drawing conclusions in the previous sections, here we analyze the specific ideas and the larger themes that arise from the data analysis and, more importantly, what youth have told us.

The research is organized into some of these larger themes and more specific ideas and, with the help of young people on PCYI's Youth Advisory Council, we have provided a number of suggestions. These ideas are intended to help address a particular challenge facing young people or to realize an opportunity to better engage them; strategies that become fairly apparent when you understand the circumstances of our youth, respect their interests, and listen carefully to what they are telling us.



2.1

PCYI's Study of Youth in Peel



The Peel Children and Youth Initiative (PCYI) has developed a cohesive 5-year (2013-18) Recreation and After School Strategy (RASS), entitled Peel's Kids Participate, for young people in Peel Region. (Access RASS online at <http://www.pcyi.org/recreation-after-school-project>) PCYI views the after school period as an opportunity for all young people to engage in exciting and challenging activities, develop positive relationships and build vital life skills. We believe that the suggestions and experiences of youth are a critical part of any effective strategy addressing issues pertaining to youth, particularly strategies aimed at increasing access to, and participation in, after school and recreation programs in Peel. With this in mind we developed an extensive research plan to engage with as many young people as possible in the Region, with diverse interests and experiences with after school activities and opportunities, so that any strategies or policy recommendations are a reflection of what youth actually need and want.

In collaboration with our community partners, we developed and implemented a mixed-methods study in 2011-2012 that included a stratified randomized survey of high school students (n=2,187) as well as targeted focus group discussions (group n=16, youth n=149) with young people across Peel Region to help us develop a clear understanding of the preferences and attitudes of young people. This report details both of these separate but complementary studies that were used to inform our Recreation and After School Strategy and to establish a baseline understanding of the directions and strategies we will need to consider if we are to succeed in increasing the number of young people who are meaningfully engaged in healthy recreational and after school activities in Peel.



PCYI's study of youth in Peel looks at different aspects of youth engagement and explores the many factors that have an influence on how they spend their time, and the activities they do – or do not – participate in. The results presented here are based on the information from a survey that was randomly administered according to a robust sampling plan that involved stratification and inverse probability weighting. The final sample size for the survey was a total of 2,187 secondary school students from across the Peel Region (Please see online Appendix). Done in collaboration with school boards, PCYI's Youth Advisory Council and other community partners (see Acknowledgments), the survey inquires about important socio-demographic information (e.g., gender; grade/age; ethnicity; immigration status; and family type) and is centered on six main themes.

This study also includes the findings from a series of sixteen focus groups that were conducted with youth involved with different youth serving agencies, whose unique experiences may not be reflected by data on the average experiences of young people (i.e., that obtained through the large sample of high school students). A total of 149 youth between the ages of 13 and 24 years participated in the focus group discussions with an equal representation of males and females (75 males, 74 females).

Taken together, these data from surveys and focus group discussions provide real insights into the lives of youth in Peel, and allows for a better understanding of how the activities, experiences and preferences differ between and among different types of youth.

Analysis

The quantitative data was weighted using calibration weights in order to normalize and harmonize the data to a point that they are representative of the populations of both school boards and could be combined into a dataset that could reliably be used to estimate numbers and percentages that reflect the entire population of high school aged youth in Peel. Statistical and analytical methods were used with the full (combined) dataset including cluster analysis, descriptive statistics, and multilevel regression (HLM). The margin of error with this quantitative analysis is 2%. Analysis was conducted by PCYI research staff and supported by research staff at both school participating school boards (i.e., Peel District School Board (PDSB) and Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB)) and PCYI's Youth Advisory Council.

In order to make the data more useful and insightful, the data were also used to create three different indices or scales that grouped together common types of activities; common levels of participation; and common levels of activity (explained fully in Section 3.2).

The data collected in focus group discussions were considered using thematic analysis, a systematic review and interpretation of data followed by categorization or coding of excerpts into themes and recurring sentiments. Analysis was conducted by PCYI research staff and supported by PCYI's Youth Advisory Council.

Limitations

The primary challenge of understanding what youth are doing is the reliance on self reporting. Although the survey data have been systematically cleaned there is still a tendency in self-report data to over report participation in positive activities and under report less desirable behaviours. The same is true of qualitative focus group research, that is limited to self-reporting and further, those responses that young people are actually comfortable with sharing in a group setting. That said, the experiences shared by youth in this report align very well with other high quality studies of young people, locally, provincially and nationally.

Survey participation rates in the school systems varied with an 88% response rate in the PDSB and a 71% response rate in the DPCDSB where active consent was required¹⁾.

Youth participation in focus group discussions was limited to those youth serving agencies that were willing to participate in the study first and foremost, as well as which youth groups were available to participate depending on their scheduling and their interest. A formal consent process for youth participants was required by one agency and participation was voluntary for all young people from all agencies.

Findings and Results

Findings of the report are organized into the following six key themes:

- What are the current levels of participation for youth in after school activities?
- How do young people spend their out-of-school time on a typical school day?
- What are the activities that youth would like to participate in more often?
- Which sorts of barriers do youth face in terms of participation?

- How do young people communicate and hear about opportunities to participate?
- What sorts of 'risky behaviours' are youth engaged in and to what extent?

Results from the high school survey and the youth focus groups have been synthesized and included in the findings for each theme. Direct quotes from focus group discussions are also incorporated into each section verbatim. To add another layer of depth and insight to the results, both complementing and contrasting with the broad survey findings.

A thread of fictional stories illustrating our findings is also woven into the text of the report. These stories accurately reflect our findings but do not represent any one young person living in Peel. While this is a more creative exercise, it is intended to provide some real world context to the findings of this research. Each story is constructed around the data youth shared that shows certain types of youth are more or less likely to be spending their time in different ways. These narratives are only based on probabilities and are not in any way intended to imply that all youth of any particular age, gender, ethnicity, family type, etc. are or will be the same.

Conclusions and Opportunities

The last section of the report does provide some interpretation of what the data are actually telling us about the experiences of youth in high schools across the Peel Region. Based on a careful and thoughtful review of the findings from each section, we have provided some sense of where there are opportunities to better align the work of community service providers, funders and public policy makers with the actual needs, interests and abilities of young people.

PCYI is committed to sharing the finding of this research as an accurate and reliable resource for community partners. We

do anticipate that many youth-serving agencies will review the findings to help identify opportunities that are specific to their circumstances, or confirm that their programs and future directions are indeed aligned with the interests of youth in Peel.

Complete Methods Section

A full description of the research methods used in this report along with the survey questions and definitions have not been printed but are readily accessible for those who are interested. Please visit www.pcyi.org/peel-student-research

¹⁾The consent process differed between school boards, which influenced the response rates obtained in each board, with active consent used in the DPCDSB and passive consent used in the PDSB. Active consent in the DPCDSB required willing students to obtain signed parental consent forms prior to participating in the survey. Passive consent in the PDSB enabled willing students to participate so long as their parents did not object to the research signaled through their returning a signed form indicating their refusal to have their child participate.

3.2

Managing the Data to Understand Youth Participation in Activities



The feedback from youth in high schools across Peel is a fascinating look at what young people are actually doing during out-of-school time, what they would like to do, what prevents them from participating in activities, how they want to find out what is available to them, and how this differs between and among different groups of youth.

While each look at the data is informative, it was important to find ways to get a better idea of participation levels and how these vary. At the same time, we discovered that there is quite a wide range of potential activities that occupy out-of-school time and that perhaps these could be best understood in natural groupings – or by the types of activities. To this end, three separate but interrelated indices were created to allow for a better understanding of the data and the actual experiences of youth. Please visit our appendix www.pcyi.org/peel-student-research

Participation Index:

Capturing common levels of participation

The data allowed us to establish a weighted average of the overall intensity of youth engagement, captured as a “participation index”. The index is continuous, with possible values ranging from 0 to 100 depending on the overall intensity of each young person’s involvement in a wide range of activities. A person who is involved in more activities will therefore have a higher number on the participation index. This index of participation allows for further analysis on the socio-demographic characteristics of our youth by those who are more – or less – likely to participate in various activities.

Activity Profile Index:

Capturing common clusters of activity participation

This index was created to get a better sense of the overall patterns of youth participation while controlling for influential socio-demographic differences. A cluster analysis algorithm was used to sort the students into three general groups or “activity profiles” according to similar types and frequencies of activities they report engaging in, while simultaneously controlling for socio-demographic differences. As a result, students were grouped into three levels of an Activity Profile Index according to three categories including ‘low’, ‘moderate’ and ‘high’ levels of engagement.

Activity Categories:

Capturing common types of activities

A third index was developed to assess the range of activities engaged in by youth according to natural thematic groupings including: social activities; recreational activities; work-related activities; and personal development activities. This allows us to better understand which types of activities our youth in high school are engaged in – and to what degree.

<i>Social Activities</i>	<i>Recreational Activities</i>	<i>Work-Related Activities</i>	<i>Personal Development</i>
<i>Includes:</i>	<i>Includes:</i>	<i>Includes:</i>	<i>Includes:</i>
Spending time with friends after school with an adult present.	Taking part in after school activities at school such as music, chess, yearbook and drama.	Going to work for pay. Going to a volunteer job.	Taking extra classes or tutoring after school.
Spending time with friends after school without an adult present.	Playing on a team or intramural sport at your school.	Taking care of younger siblings without an adult present.	Participating in programs at church, mosque or temple.
	Taking lessons, playing sports or participating in an organized activity at a community centre.		
	Taking lessons or participating in an organized activity at a library.		
	Going to Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, Young men and Young women Club, etc. at a centre or organization after school.		

Findings

4.1

Youth Participation Levels in After School and Recreation Activities

In this section we provide an overview of what young people in Peel are actually doing after school and their levels of participation in a variety of different possible activities. The data also allow us the opportunity to see where there are differences between and among youth and how common certain types of activities are for all young people in our high schools. Youth tell us there are important differences in the types of activities youth commonly prefer, and in how frequently they will participate.

The data allows us to create three different metrics, including a Participation Index, an Activity Profile Index, and Activity Categories, which are fully explained in Section 3.2. This kind of analysis provides useful insights, enabling ‘participation profiles’ that describe how different youth in Peel are engaged – and to different degrees – in a range of after school and other recreational activities.

Overall After School Participation Index

The data were used to create a weighted average of youth participation in all of the twelve after school activities included in the survey. This ‘participation index’ provides a sense of the overall levels of after school activity among students in high school. When we look at the results across socio-demographic lines, we see some interesting differences in overall participation levels between and among various groups of young people, most frequently associated with either the gender of a youth, their grade (age), and/or their ethnicity.

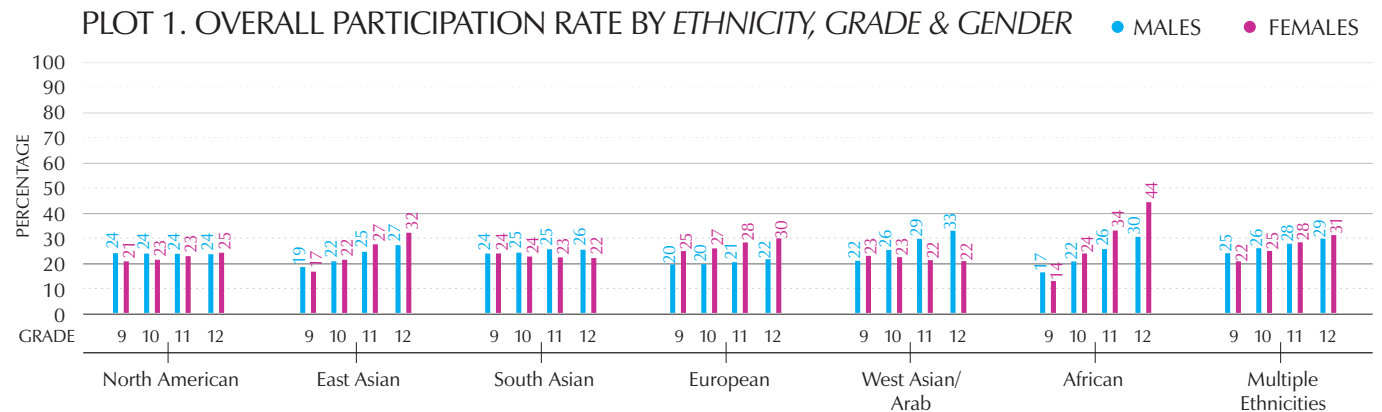
As the charts below demonstrate, the most evident and interesting trends are found in the combination, or interaction, of these three characteristics. In general terms we find that older youth (by grade) are more likely to participate in activities and programs than younger students. This gradual escalation in participation as students get older is particularly true of young women and young people from African and East Asian backgrounds. This trend is not found however among youth from South Asian backgrounds who seem to participate at roughly the same levels (22-26%) throughout the duration of their time in high school - as do young people born in North America (21-25%).

Overall, young women tell us they tend to be more involved than young men are and this is especially true of those who are of African or European backgrounds. In fact, by grade 11 and 12 young women of African descent are among the most active and engaged young people. Similarly, young women with a European background, and young women with an East Asian background and those who identified as being from multiple ethnic groups participate quite substantially.

These trends both support and dispel the commonly held narrative that young women from ethnic communities can’t participate. This common assumption can be seen among certain groups of young women, but not across the board. For example, Grade 9 young women of African descent are among the least active but by grade 12 are our most active youth. In the East Asian community the Grade 9 young women are less active than the Grade 12 young women but both participate at levels that are higher than their male counterparts.

We do, however, find that participation rates for young women from West Asian / Arab backgrounds and young women of South Asian descent do not increase as they get older and that young men from both of these communities consistently participate more than females. This is true at every grade level, and that gap grows as these students get older. In fact, by grade 12 there is a significant gap (11%) between the overall participation levels of young men (33%) and young women (22%) of West Asian and Arab backgrounds, bearing in mind that by grade 12 these young men are among the most engaged of all the males in high school.

This plot demonstrates some of the interesting differences we find in terms of overall participation in after school and recreational activities.





Jala is in grade nine and attends high school in Peel. She lives with both her mother and father in Peel. They immigrated to Peel from Jordan five years ago. Jala spends many afternoons looking after her two younger brothers and hanging out at home with her girlfriends while their moms chat in the backyard. There is a library, a community centre and a park with a playground near her house although Jala rarely visits the library or attends programs there.

After school Jala spends most of her time doing homework, watching tv or using her laptop to chat with friends. She doesn't have a part time job yet although she's interested in working and volunteering.

Jala is looking for opportunities to spend more time in art galleries and museums, learning how to cook and being involved in the fine arts – especially painting. She's interested in taking cooking lessons or painting lessons but she hasn't found the time yet since she is quite busy with her school work and her responsibilities at home with her siblings. When lessons are offered that interest her, they are offered at times that are just too inconvenient for Jala to make it...

4.1

Youth Participation Levels in After School and Recreation Activities

While this differential level of participation is clear from the data, contributing factors are more difficult to determine. For example, we find very low percentages of youth who do not participate because their parents will not let them (9%), and there is no strong correlation between this barrier and any specific ethnicity or gender of young people who experience this problem (See Section 4.4 on Barriers).

Youth Participation in Specific Activities

While there is value in understanding the patterns of overall participation rates and how these vary between different groups of young people, the data allow a more thorough examination of what youth are actually doing. This analysis provides a picture of specific individual after school and recreational activities and answers the important question: what types of students are more or less likely to be involved in what sorts of activities?

What Are Youth Doing On A Regular Basis After School?

Our survey listed 12 specific activities and asked the student to describe how often they've done each activity in the past school year. The activities included taking extra classes, participating in programs at mosques, churches or temples, taking part in clubs at school, etc. The complete list of activities can be found in our online appendix (<http://www.pcyi.org/peel-student-research>).

The students gave the activity a rating from 1 to 6 levels, 1 being never, 3 being about once a month and 6 being more than once a week.

The top activities the youth reporting participating in on a regular basis of once a week or more are:

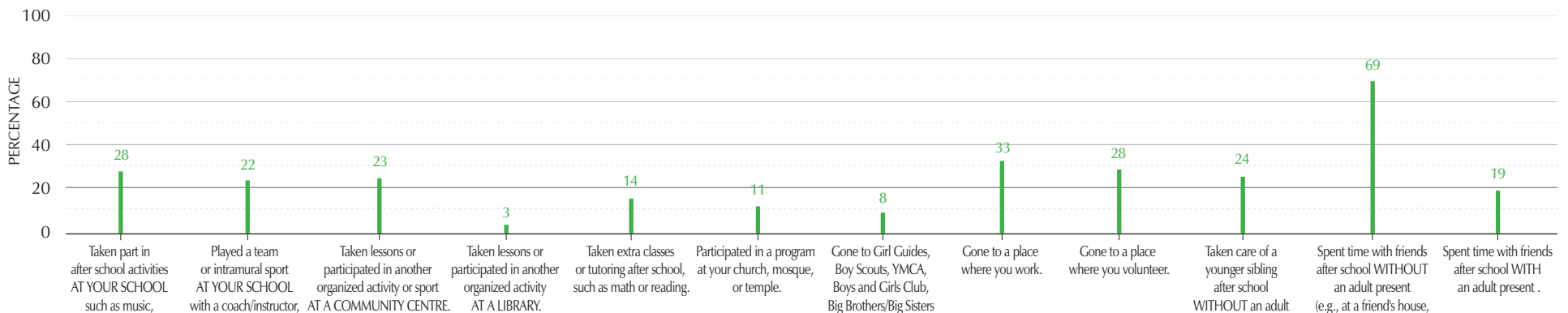
1. Spending time with friends, for example at a friend's house or the mall (69% of all youth report being involved in this activity on a very regular basis (several times a month or more))
2. Working for pay (33%)
3. Non-athletic afterschool activities at school such as band, chess or drama (28%)
4. Volunteering (28%)

5. Looking after siblings (24%)
6. Participating in organized activities at a community centre such as hockey teams or other lessons (23%)
7. Playing sports at school, including intramural school teams (22%)

Although social time is clearly a priority for youth, and is an important part of their social development, we do see a fairly healthy combination of social activities and responsibilities. Substantial numbers of youth report responsibilities like sibling care (24%); many work part time (33%); and nearly a quarter of all youth are involved in volunteer activities (28%) on a regular basis. At the same time we see substantial proportions of youth participating in more traditional recreational activities such as school sports (22%); going to organized activities at community centers (23%); and joining other non-athletic clubs (28%) at their schools.

Group discussions also revealed that being connected to friends is important for not only for youth on an informal basis, such as hanging out and socializing, but also in connection to organized activities. Having a friend to attend organized activities with

PLOT 2. TOP ACTIVITIES BY YOUTH





...Jala's next door neighbor is also in her class at school. Cory lives with his mom and was born in Peel. His Dad lives and works in Toronto and Cory sees him on week-ends. Similarly to Jala, Cory spends most of his afternoon afterschool hanging out with his friends, usually with an adult present. Cory also rarely goes to the local library. He belonged to the local Beavers when he was younger but he no longer is involved in Scouts. Instead he spends most of his time watching videos and texting his friends or playing video games together.

When asked, Cory says he's very interested in learning a new sport, learning to record music or learning how to cook. He hasn't started any of these activities though because he hasn't found any programs yet that suit his interests and are offered at a time he can come.

In the upper grades of Cory and Jala's high school, a South Asian young man, Dev, is very involved with the soccer team at the local community centre. He lives with his mom and dad and spends a great deal of time looking after his younger brother and sister while both his parents are at work between the time school lets out and they sit down to dinner. Dev also volunteers at the community centre where he plays soccer. He helps out with coaching the soccer team of his six year old sister...

4.1

Youth Participation Levels in After School and Recreation Activities

was considered a factor that encouraged increased participation in more formal organized activities. We also know from our research on barriers that youth are less likely to participate in activities when their friends aren't interested.

How Activities Differ Among Youth

There are a lot of commonalities among what young people actually do in terms of their recreational activities although we do see some differences that appear to be linked with the gender, grade (age) and the ethnicity of our youth. Interestingly, family composition (one or two parents) and the immigration status of youth (born in or having immigrated to Canada) produced no noticeable differences in terms of the sorts of activities youth do after school. The gap between participation levels of younger children (0-12 years) from newcomer families identified in PCYI's study of parents (e.g., it takes about five years for newcomer children to participate at rates comparable to Canadian born children) does not exist by the time youth are in high school. (PCYI's Building Healthy Child Development: The Experiences of Parents in Peel, 2012)

Plot 3 demonstrates that young men and young women in high school report participating in the same number of activities, but the type of things they tend to do differ in a number of interesting and unanticipated ways. For example, we see that large percentages of all youth go to work but young women are more likely to be employed than young men are (36% vs. 30%); and although young women do provide more sibling care, one in five young men (21%) do this on a regular basis.

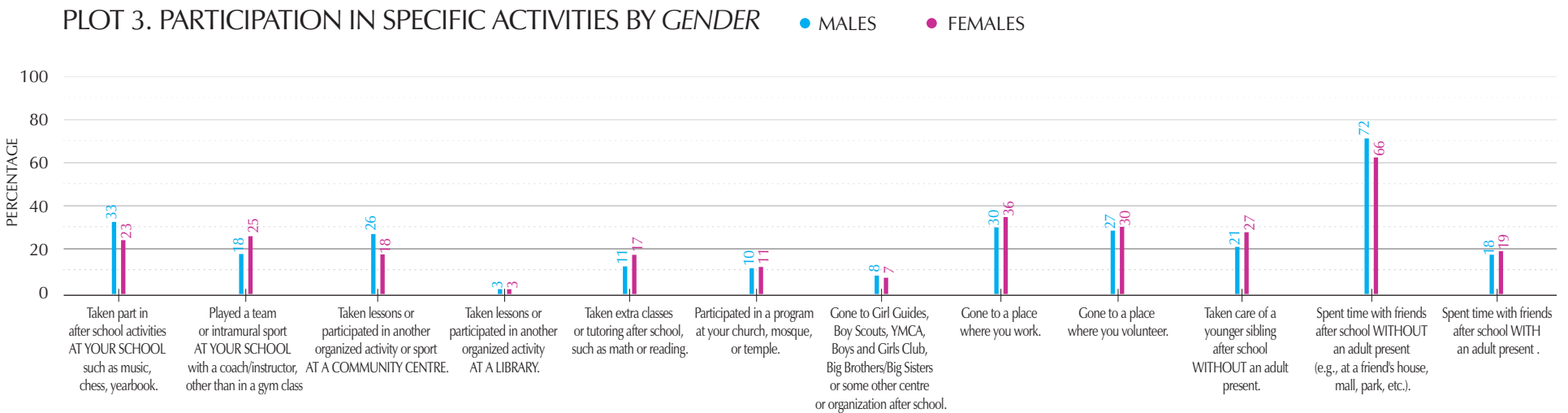
Young women are also more likely to be involved in some form of tutoring (17% vs. 11%); volunteer slightly more than their male counterparts (30% vs. 27%); and are less likely to be hanging out with friends on their own (66% vs. 72%). While it is unclear why, young men are considerably more likely to have joined a non-athletic club or group at their schools than females are (34% vs. 23%).

In terms of more traditional kinds of recreation, young women tell us they are much more likely to participate in sports at their schools (26% vs. 18%) although greater numbers of young men will go to their local community centers for lessons and sports of some kind (26% vs. 18%).

It is noteworthy that substantial numbers – about 11% of all of our youth – are attending some kind of organized activities at a place of worship on a fairly basis and this engagement continues all throughout high school.

"I think like the presence of your friends there is really important like last year I only joined the swim meet club because I had another friend who wanted to be active. Like I think if one of us wasn't interested in being active, the other one wouldn't have joined anything." (Mississauga, Female, Erin Meadows Library Teen Advisory Group)

This plot shows the probability of a young man or young woman participating once a week or more in the following activities, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.



4.1

Youth Participation Levels in After School and Recreation Activities

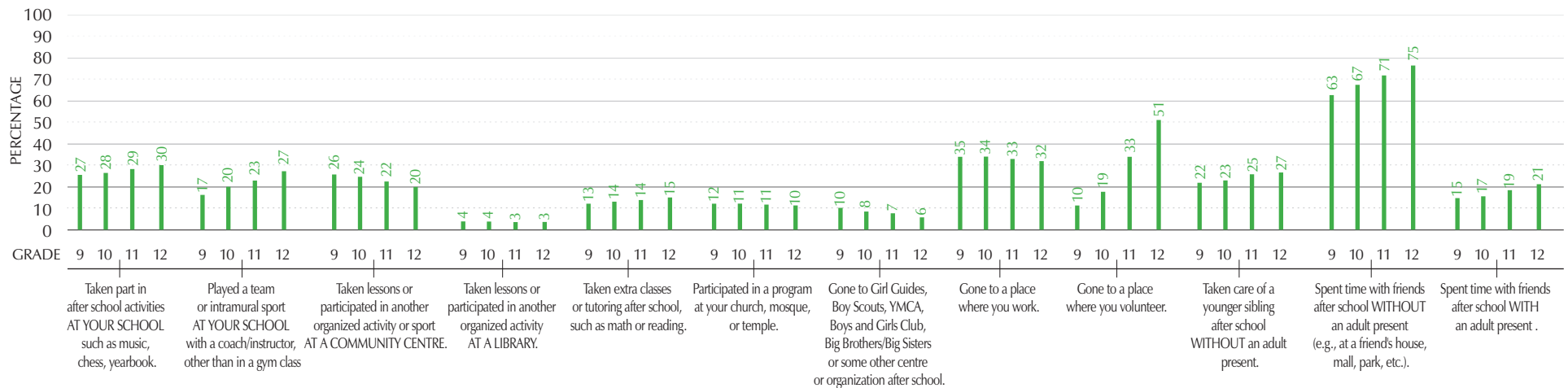
Although their obligations and responsibilities increase as they get older, students tend to participate more frequently in after school activities as they get into higher grades. The change in participation rates between grades 9 and 12 is most obvious in terms of volunteering, which grows from 10% to 51% of youth, and engagement in sports teams at school increases steadily from 17% to 27%. There is a small but somewhat predictable increase in how many youth are providing sibling care (from 22% to 27%).

Social time without adults also becomes more important to youth as they get older, and is also probably easier for youth to arrange. We see 75% of grade twelve students hanging out with friends during the after school period, up from 63% in grade nine. Interestingly, we see participation levels at community centers actually dropping off as students get older (from 26% to 20%) while their rates of attendance at a place of worship for some form of program or activity remains fairly consistent at around 11%.



This plot shows the probability of a student participating once a week or more in the following activities according to grade, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

PLOT 4. PARTICIPATION IN SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES BY GRADE (AGE)





...When he's not at school, looking after his siblings or volunteering, Dev spends most of his free time surfing the web, texting with his friends and hanging out with his friends without adults around. Dev is very interested in continuing to learn new sports. He'd likely to play on one of the teams of his university next year and feels he needs to improve to be at the university level. He hasn't joined a new team yet though because all the programs he can find are offered at times when he cannot attend. He has also had difficulty finding programs he's interested in. He keeps an eye on the posters at school though for new opportunities.

Dev's cousin Radha lives at the other end of Peel from Dev and attends grade 12 at her local high school. Dev and Radha see each other frequently as their families spend a lot of time together on the weekends and at holidays. Both Dev and Radha have two younger siblings and they often hang out together as a group. Radha spends much more time than Dev on homework and chatting with her friends online. Both Dev and Radha spend about the same amount of time hanging out with their friends without adult supervision.

Radha wants to be a musician or to open a restaurant when she grows up and is often looking for ways to learn to cook new dishes and play new instruments. She'd also really like to learn to record music so that she could make a few songs to put on YouTube. She's kept her eye on the web looking for local opportunities but so far can't attend the lessons that are being offered because they're at inconvenient times for her and she is spending a great deal of time on her homework in preparation for university next year...

4.1

Youth Participation Levels in After School and Recreation Activities

A student's ethnicity plays a weaker role than both gender and grade in terms of influencing the sorts of activities youth participate in, although there are some differences between and among different groups of young people.

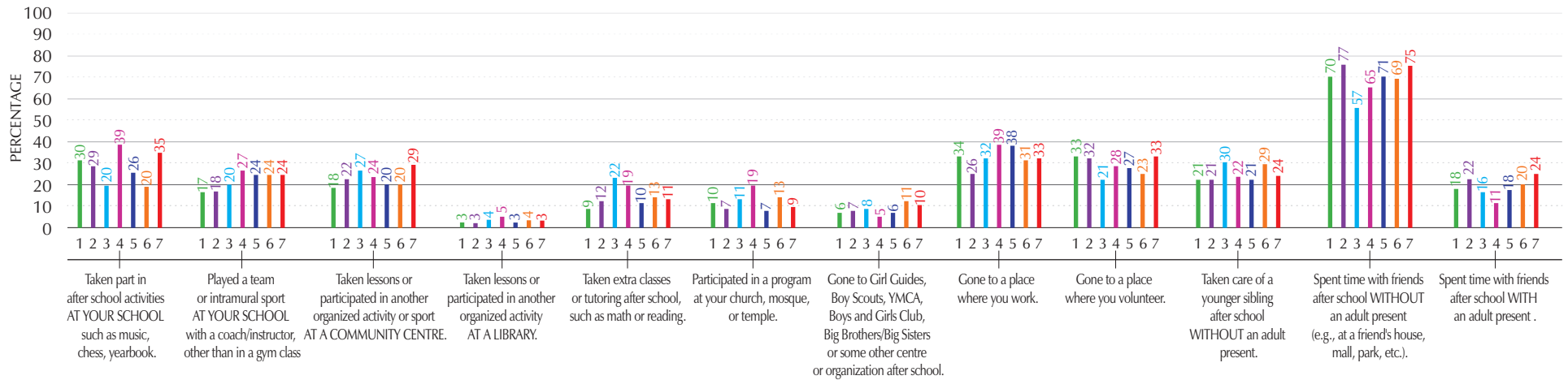
The data shows that students of North American descent and African descent tend to participate more in activities that are not related to sports than their peers. Students of South Asian descent are more likely to be engaged at their local community center than most other young people and the tendency

to participate in programs or activities provided by faith based organizations, including churches, temples or mosques, is more common among youth from African, West Asian or Arab communities than it is for most students.

This plot shows the probability of a student participating once a week or more in the following activities according to their self-identified ethnicity, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

PLOT 5. PARTICIPATION IN SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES BY ETHNICITY

Column Number: 1 North American 2 European 3 South Asian 4 African 5 East Asian 6 West Asian & Arab 7 Multiple



4.1

Youth Participation Levels in After School and Recreation Activities

Activity Categories

The data provides a good analysis of overall participation profiles, and where and how they differ among groups of youth. In order to better understand the feedback young people have provided, we created an index that would allow us to aggregate the sorts of things students actually do into four broad

categories of similar types of activities (see Section 3.2). A metric of this nature provides an opportunity to understand the influence that different types of activities may have on the lives of young people, and a somewhat clearer picture of overall youth activity.

Please see the comprehensive listing in section 3.2 for a detailed list of what each activity category includes.

We are working with four broad categories of activities:

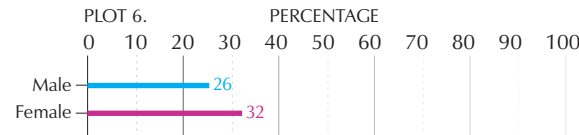
- 1. Work and Volunteer Activities** such as working at a job for pay
- 2. Friends and Social Activities** such as spending time with friends after school or texting with friends
- 3. Recreation Activities** such as playing sports at school or participating in organized activities at a community centre
- 4. Personal Development Activities** such as taking tutoring after school

Work and Volunteer Activities

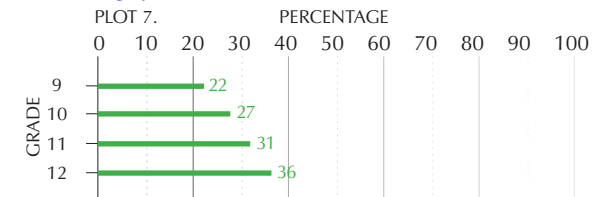
Overall, about 62% of all high school students in Peel Region work or volunteer on a regular basis (i.e., two to four times a month) and about 30% of high school students work or volunteer on a very regular basis (i.e., more than once a week). The biggest influence on working and volunteering are gender and age, with young women having consistently higher participation rates in these types of activities than young men and students in older grades participating more often than younger students.

Activity Group: Work

This plot shows the probability of a young man or young woman working once a week or more, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.



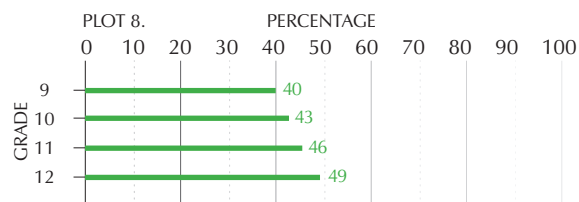
This plot shows the probability of a Peel high school student working once a week or more by grade level, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.



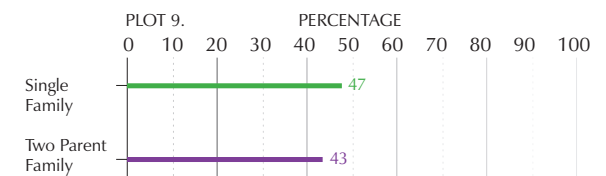
Friends and Social Activities

About 45% of students participate in social activities after school several times a week or more. The most influential socio-demographic characteristics on the likelihood that youth will be spending time with friends engaged in social activities are grade and family structure. As Plots 8 and 9 demonstrate, older students in higher grades and young people from single parent homes are more likely to spend their afterschool time this way than younger students and those from two parent homes.

This plot shows the probability of a Peel high school student participating in social activities once a week or more by grade level, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.



This plot shows the probability of a Peel high school student participating in social activities once a week or more by the type of family they live in, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.



Activity Group: Social



...Tasnim is Radha's best friend. She attends grade 12 at the same school as Radha and lives with her mom. Tasnim and her mom immigrated to Peel from Somalia two years ago. Tasnim is very active in afterschool activities and is one of the stars on her school's young women basketball team. Tasnim has even thought about trying to go for the WNBA. In her free time Tasnim hangs out with her friends usually without adults around, naps and chats with her friends.

In addition to continuing to learn and practice her sports, Tasnim is very interested in the fine arts and writes a lot of poetry in her journal. She would like to get to know some poets and maybe get some tips but nothing is offered that meets her interests and she is extremely busy with her sports, her homework and her home responsibilities since it's just her and her mom...

4.1

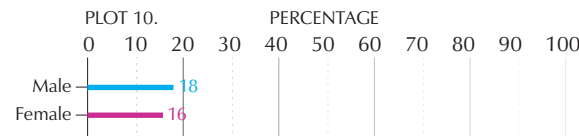
Youth Participation Levels in After School and Recreation Activities

Recreation Activities

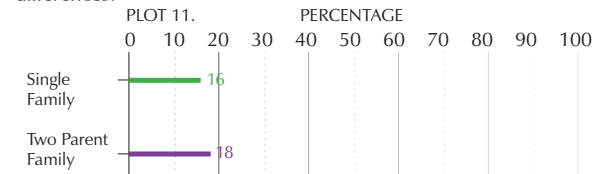
In terms of recreational activities, we find that almost 60% of all students participated regularly (i.e., two to four times a month) in recreational activities after school although only 16% of youth participated very regularly (i.e., more than once a week). Plots 10 and 11 show that gender and family structure are most closely associated with differential rates of participation in recreational activities, with young men and students from two parent families more likely to spend afterschool time this way than young women and students from single parent homes.

Activity Group: Recreational

This plot shows the probability of a Peel high school student participating in recreational activities once a week or more by the gender, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.



This plot shows the probability of a Peel high school student participating in recreational activities once a week or more by the type of family they live in, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

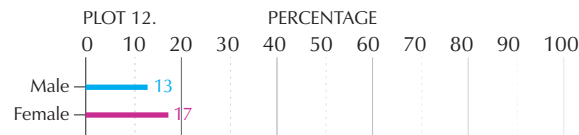


Personal Development Activities

It is encouraging to see that approximately 30% of all students are involved in some form of personal development activities on a regular basis (i.e., two to four times a month), and 16% of them who do participate, do so quite regularly (i.e., more than once a week). We find however that young women are considerably more likely than young men to participate in these sorts of activities.

This plot shows the probability of a young man or young woman participating in personal development activities once a week or more, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

Activity Group: Personal Development



4.2

How Youth Use Their Time on a Typical School Day

Understanding how we can better support and engage youth requires a clear and realistic picture of how they are currently spending their out-of-school time each day, and how these patterns of activity differ between and among different groups of students.

To this end, we asked students to estimate how much time they spend on a range of common potential activities after school on an average school day. This included asking about social activities like hanging out with friends, using social media, talking on the phone, etc., as well as other common activities like doing homework, providing sibling care, and working for pay or volunteering. We were also very interested in understanding the proportion of youth who are participating in healthy physical activity.

Students were asked how many hours each school day they spent doing a list of activities. They gave an estimate for each activity on a six point scale, ranging from none; to between 30

minutes and an hour; to more than 2 hours.

The activities that most students report spending more than an hour each day doing:

1. Surfing the Internet, using social media (64% of our participants say they spend more than an hour a day doing this)
2. Watching TV and movies (55%)
3. Hanging out with friends (50%)
4. Chatting with friends on phone or by text (49%)
5. Doing homework (43%)

What is clear from this list of activities is that youth take considerable time each day to socialize and connect with friends either electronically or in person. There are some important variations between young women and young men, youth from different family structures, and those who have more recently immigrated. In general terms, youth in Peel are busy when they are not in school.

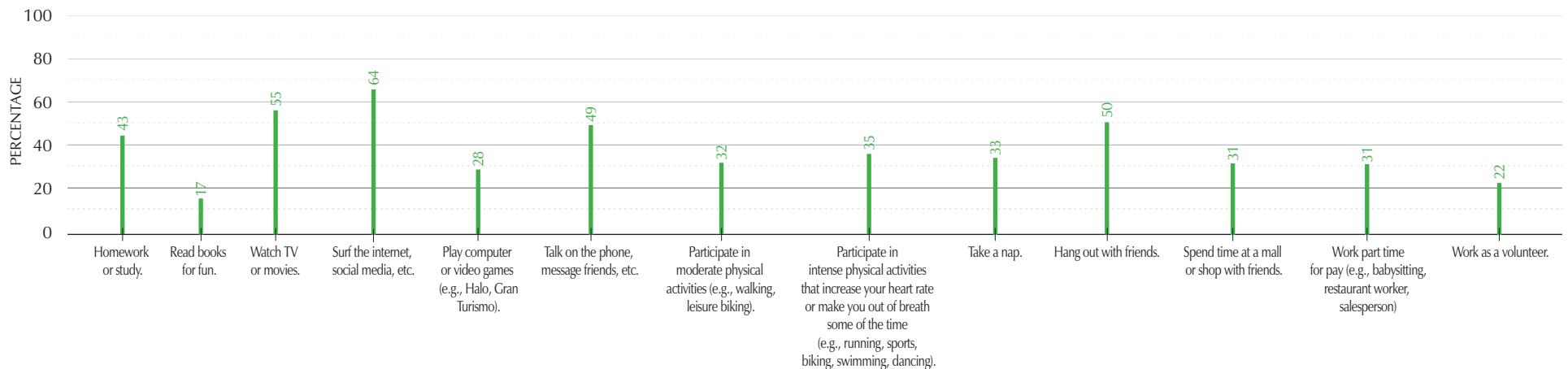
“We need more time. There’s six hours you spend at school you gotta get home, eat, relax and then you gotta do your homework, especially if you want to go to college. So there just isn’t enough time if you wanna do something fun on top of that.”

(Brampton, Female, COSTI Immigration Centre of Peel)

These figures are supported by the Peel Student Health Survey that found 48% of students spend two hours or more on a cell phone or computer on weekdays. (Peel Student Health, 2011, pg. 71)

PLOT 13. HOW YOUTH USE THEIR TIME ON A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY

This plot shows the percentage of students who said they spend more than an hour a day on the activity.



4.2

Differences in Time Use Between and Among Youth

When we look at the data youth provided on how they use their out-of-school time on a typical school day, there are quite a number of important differences in terms of what they actually do, and what their priorities might look like based on these activities. In fact, the analysis shows that gender, grade (age), immigration status and the type of family a young person lives in all influence the type of activities in which youth will engage.

The graph demonstrates some substantial differences between how young women and young men spend their time on a weekday. In terms of after-school activities we find that young women (54%) are much more likely than young men (31%) to spend their time studying or doing homework; doing volunteer work (25% vs. 18%); and working part-time for pay (36% vs. 25%).

We also find that young women are far more likely to 'go the mall with friends' (39%) than young men (23%) and enjoy spending much more of their time on the phone or messaging with friends.

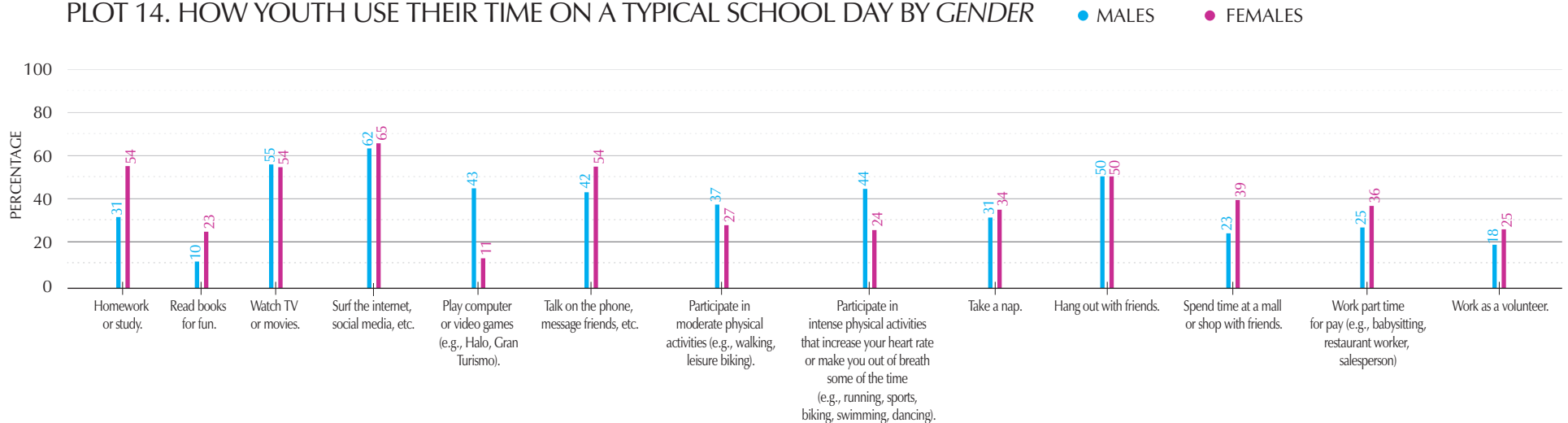
In terms of traditionally defined recreational activities, young men are much more likely to be active during out-of-school time and report substantially higher levels of both moderate (37% for young men vs. 27% for young women) and intense (45% vs. 25%) physical activity. While this kind of active participation is healthy we also find males are four times more likely to spend their time playing video games than females.

It is also interesting – and a bit surprising – to see that both males (31%) and females (34%) will take a nap for more than an hour a day after the school day.



This plot shows the probability of a young man or young woman engaging in each activity for an hour or more on an average school day, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

PLOT 14. HOW YOUTH USE THEIR TIME ON A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY BY GENDER



4.2

Differences in Time Use Between and Among Youth

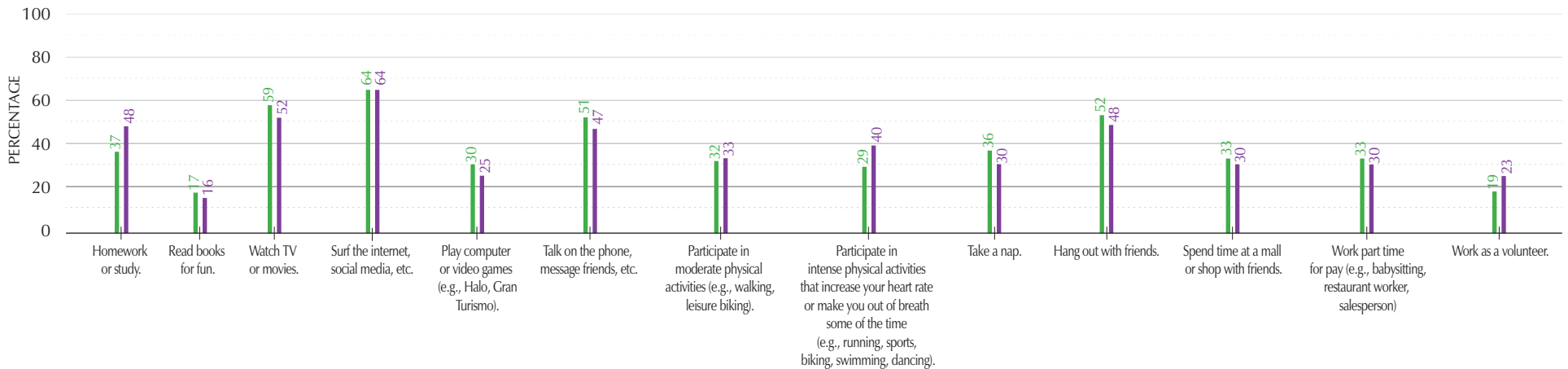


Plot 15 shows that the rates of participation and the activities of youth from single and two parent families are similar in many ways. That said, youth from single parent families spend substantially less time doing homework (37% vs. 48%); are less likely to be engaged in intense physical activities (29% vs. 40%); are more likely to spend time watching TV and movies (59% vs. 52%); and are slightly less likely to work as volunteers than youth from two parent families.

This plot shows the probability of a young man or young woman engaging in each activity for an hour or more on an average school day, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

PLOT 15. HOW YOUTH USE THEIR TIME ON A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY BY FAMILY TYPE

● SINGLE FAMILY ● TWO-PARENT FAMILY



4.2

Differences in Time Use Between and Among Youth

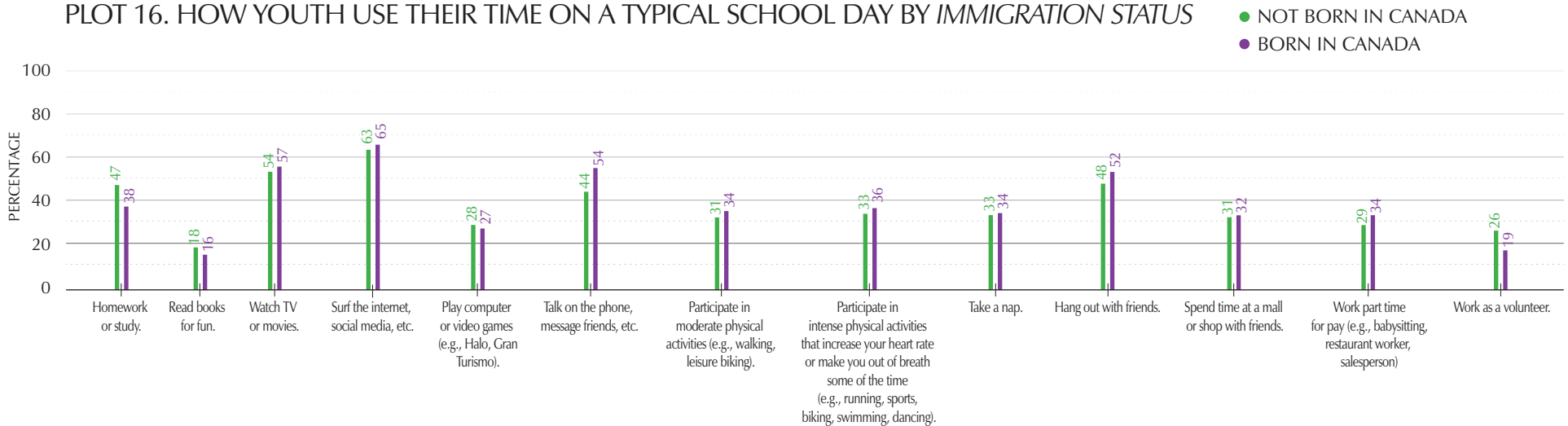


While there are certainly many similarities, Plot 16 demonstrates that there are a number of substantial differences between the activities, interests and time use between youth from immigrant families compared with youth that were born in Canada. Students who are immigrants are likely to spend more time on homework (47% vs. 38%); work as volunteers for more than an hour on an average day (26% vs. 19%); and spend less of their time on the phone and hanging out with friends (without adults) than youth that were born in Canada.

Youth born in Canada are slightly more likely to be spending at least an hour a day working part-time for pay (29% for youth not born in Canada vs. 34% for youth born in Canada).

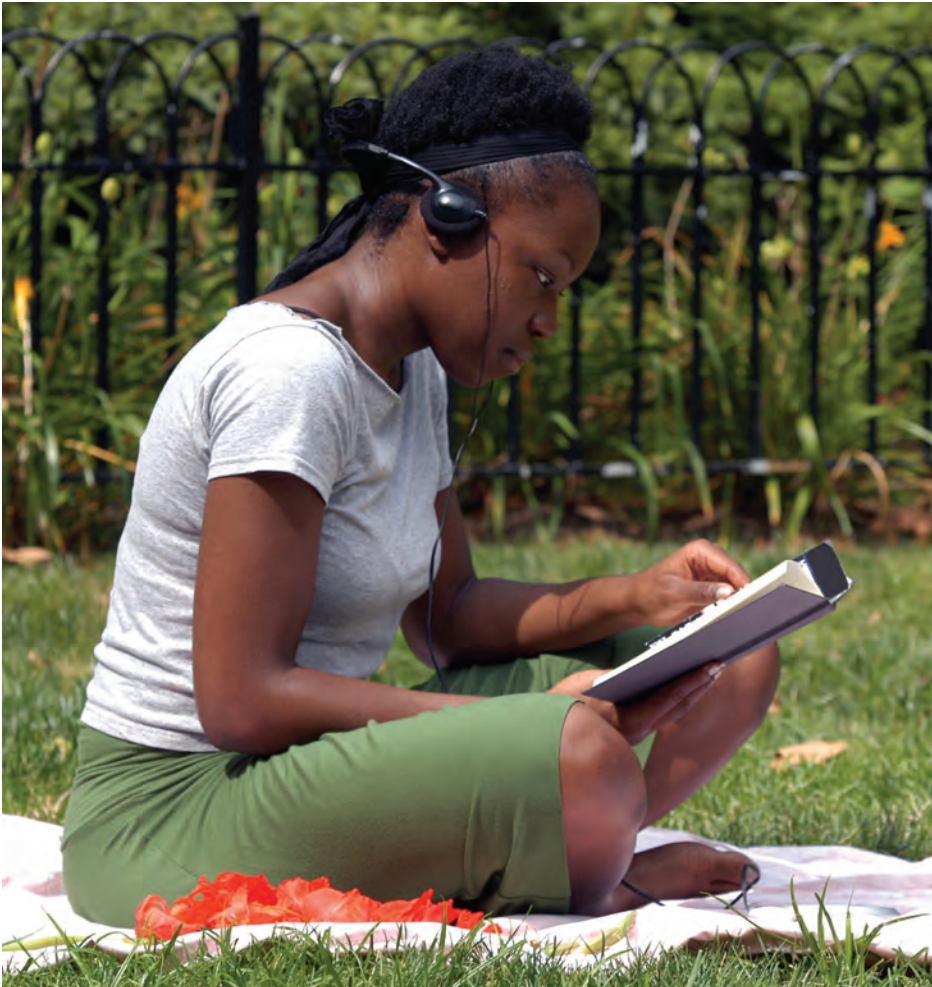
This plot shows the probability of a student engaging in each activity for an hour or more on an average school day, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

PLOT 16. HOW YOUTH USE THEIR TIME ON A TYPICAL SCHOOL DAY BY IMMIGRATION STATUS



4.2

Differences in Time Use Between and Among Youth



There are quite a number of predictable differences between how younger students and older students spend their time and these are reflected throughout the report. In terms of how they spend their out-of-school time on weekdays, youth in higher grades are much more likely to spend more than an hour a day at part-time jobs (48% for youth in older grades, 16% for youth in younger grades), and are also more likely to study and do homework after school (50% vs. 36%) than those in younger grades. Although they are obviously busier, we find students in higher grades also manage to spend more time on the phone with their friends than younger students.

“When you are in grade 12 you need to know what you need to take to get into school and keep your grades up. You need to know what you need in your portfolio or whatever, so it takes a lot of time because there is a lot going on.” (Brampton, Female, COSTI Immigration Centre of Peel)

4.3

What Would Youth in Peel Region Like To Do?

Understanding how youth in Peel spend their time has some obvious implications for program planning. If we hope to engage more of our youth in healthy constructive recreational and developmental opportunities, it is essential that we understand what they are actually interested in doing, and how well that aligns – or does not align – with what is available to them.

To this end, we asked students to indicate the sorts of activities they really enjoyed participating in or would like to participate in during the after school period. Students were given a list of 15 activities and asked to rate how often they would be interested in participating in these activities. They gave each activity a rating on a six level scale ranging from not at all to more than once a week.

Activities Students Expressed the highest levels of interest in are:

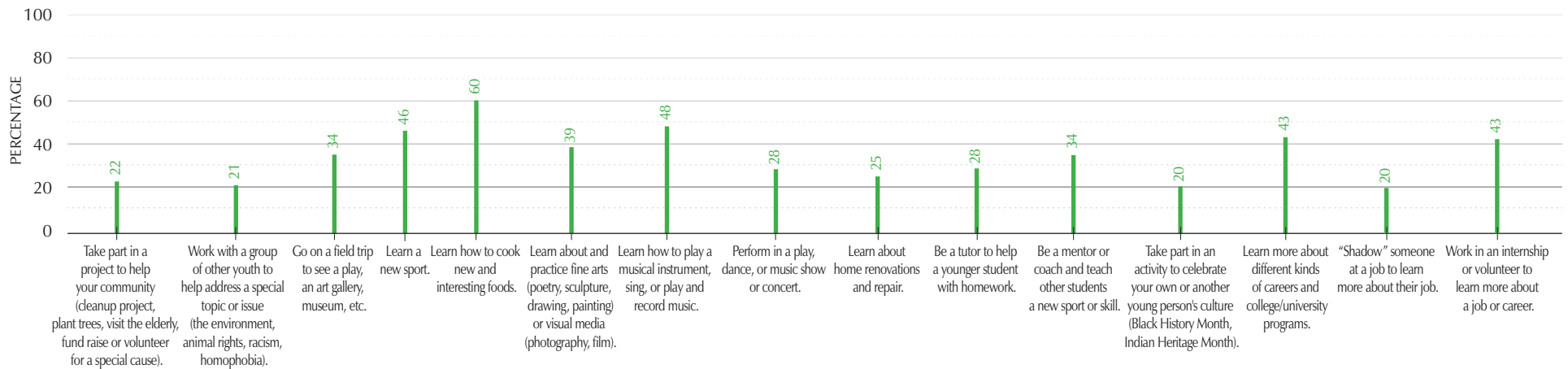
1. Learn how to cook new and interesting foods (60% of our participants expressed substantial interest in this activity)
2. Learn how to play a musical instrument, sing or record music (48%)
3. Learn a new sport (46%)
4. Work in an internship or learn more about a career (43%)
5. Learn about different kinds of careers and college/university programs (43%)
6. Learn and practice fine arts such as poetry, sculpting or painting (39%)

This list of youth preferences is interesting for a number of reasons. While it does include learning a new sport, which is often incorporated into after school and recreational programming, the majority of activities selected by youth and discussed in focus group discussions are not generally included in the programs that are widely (and affordably) available in local communities and schools.

It is also noteworthy that just over 20% of young people would like to take part in community projects or take a special issue working with others – a large and untapped potential.

“Having to sit down and listen to a lot of things like eating healthy, listening to about how you can control your stress. We already know about that a lot. You go to school and they teach you that in school. You go into biology you hear about it all day. So I don’t want to deal with it after school.” (Brampton, Female, COSTI Immigration Centre of Peel)

PLOT 17. ACTIVITY INTEREST



This plot shows the probability of a student engaging in each activity for an hour or more on an average school day, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

4.3

What Would Youth in Peel Region Like To Do?

That youth are interested in learning more about arts and music is somewhat predictable, that the strong shared preference among youth for opportunities to learn more about career planning, experience internships, and building links to post secondary institutions is more unexpected.

Almost 30% of high school youth tell us that they do not participate in recreational after school programs because there is nothing that suits their interests. Parents with younger children (0-12 years) feel much the same way with 30% reporting the programs that were available did not interest their child.

Aside from facility challenges – especially to provide opportunities to learn about cooking – many of the partnerships and linkages that would be required to provide these sorts of opportunities are not currently in place. Given that most after school and recreation providers often struggle to provide their existing programs, the ability to develop the new relationships and partner with different organizations from the arts, music, vocational and post-secondary institutions is understandably limited.

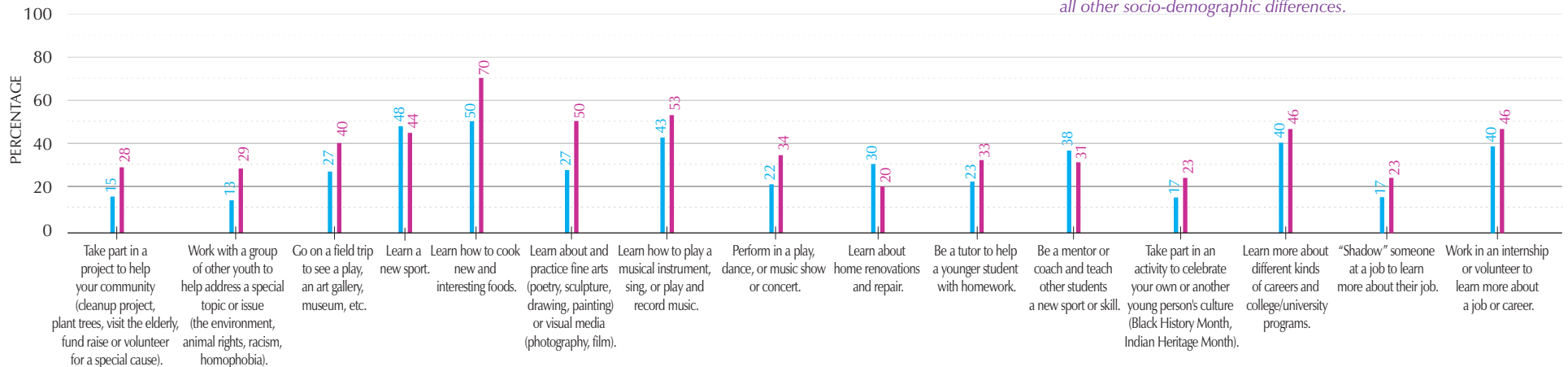
Activity Preferences Among Youth by Gender

While there is a fairly strong consensus among all youth in high school about the kinds of activities they would enjoy doing during the after school period, and presumably during out-of-school time, there are some differences between the interests of males and females.

As the data below demonstrates, young women are more interested and likely to participate in almost all of the potential after school activities that were suggested. For example, while both genders are quite interested in cooking, there is nearly a 20% gap in the interest level between young men (50%) and young women (70%). Young women are also considerably more interested in working with other youth on a project, working in their communities, and show a greater interest in fine arts and opportunities to attend the performing arts.

Young men did tell us they were slightly more interested than young women in some of the more traditional male roles including mentoring or coaching opportunities, learning a new sport, and home renovation – but these differences were not nearly as pronounced as they might have been in the past.

PLOT 18. ACTIVITY INTEREST BY GENDER ● MALES ● FEMALES



This plot shows the probability of a young man or young woman expressing substantial interest in each activity, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

4.3

What Would Youth in Peel Region Like To Do?

“In girl guides you know I learned a lot of really cool skills, like a lot to do with camping, but there are also a few other places we went. Like one time we had a professional model come in and show us how to walk down the catwalk. And we also did briefly something to do with feminism and we learned about all these women who did something special.”
(Mississauga, Female,
Erin Mills Library Teen Advisory Group)

“Healthy living young women club is fun, every week on Mondays we meet up for about two hours and we have a different activity every week like self defense or playing games, Zumba, cooking class.”
(Brampton, Female,
COSTI Immigration Centre of Peel).

“For me it’s, team building exercises. You know, hard work and physical endurance. The most fun I had was playing manhunt on top of the school.”
(Mississauga, Male,
Peel Children’s Aid Society)

4.4

Barriers Youth Face to Participation in Activities

Having a better understanding of how young people spend their time, and knowing the range of activities that would be of interest to them, is critical for program planning and youth policy development. That said, we know there are a number of barriers or limitations that actually prevent youth from greater levels of participation in healthy recreational opportunities, particularly during after school hours.

To this end, we asked students to indicate the kinds of things that limited their participation in those after school and recreational activities that they could – or would – enjoy doing. (see Question 22 in our appendix <http://www.pcyi.org/peel-student-research>).

Top Barriers Students Experience to Participating in Recreational and After School Activities:

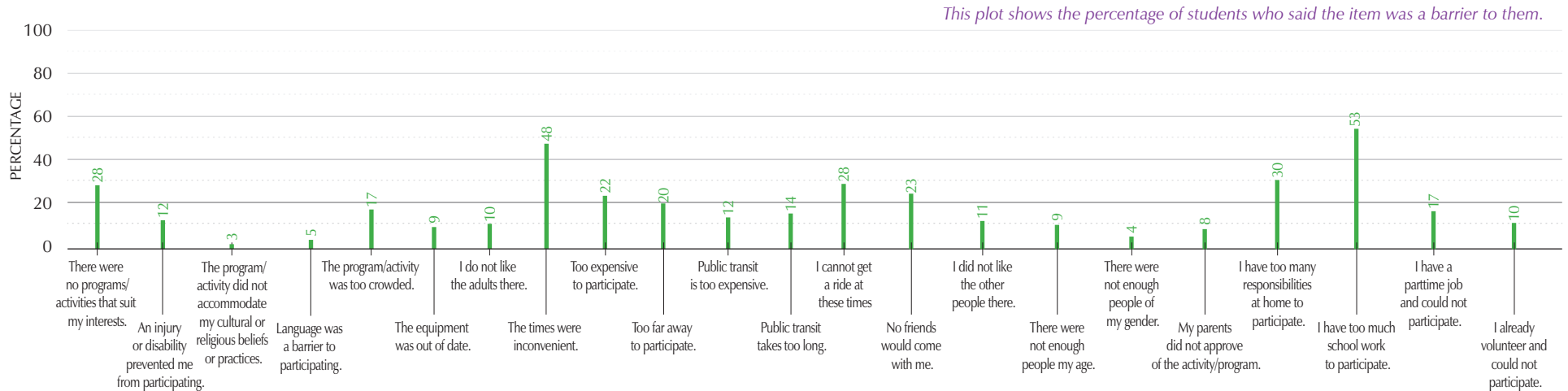
1. Too much school work (53% of students identifying this as a barrier)
2. Inconvenient times (48%)
3. Too many home responsibilities (30%)
4. No programs that suit my interests (28%)
5. Cannot get a ride (28%)

Students were given a list of 22 items (see online Appendix), ranging from “too expensive” to “inconvenient times” to “no programs, that suit their interest” and were asked to respond (yes or no).

“I’d like actually go to one of those programs if they had them after school. Not every day, but once a week. Ones with interacting with your child and letting them interact with other children”. (Mississauga, Female, VITA)

Plot 19 illustrates a number of the key challenges to better engaging youth in healthy recreational activities, especially during the after school period. We know from Section 4.2 that while there are differences in how youth spend their time, there is no shortage of responsibilities like homework (47%), volunteering (24%), sibling care (32%) and employment (26%) that consume a large amount of their time - especially among older students.

PLOT 19. TOP BARRIERS STUDENTS EXPERIENCE TO PARTICIPATING IN RECREATIONAL AND AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES



Not surprisingly, when we asked about after school opportunities, the timing was inconvenient for almost half of them (48%).

It is noteworthy however that nearly 30% of youth in high school do not find there are program opportunities that suit their interests, and this lack of alignment between what is available and what would appeal to youth is a substantial barrier to engagement – and an opportunity to explore new and different kinds of activities.

At the same time, transportation continues to be a key problem for many youth - especially for young women and single parent households - although this is a challenge that might be considerably easier to address (e.g., second or late buses).

“I think if you have a job, like I know some of my friends who have jobs can’t participate in after school programs because the times don’t match up because the programs start at three but they have to be at work by four and there is travel time so they can’t really participate. I find people who participate in after school programs are those ones who don’t have a job.” (Brampton, Female, COSTI Immigration Centre of Peel).

Factors That Are Not Significant Barriers to Participating in Recreational and After School Activities

The data illustrated in Plot 19 also highlights – from a long list of potential barriers – those things that do not emerge as important issues for youth in terms of their engagement. Although Peel Region is known for its religious and linguistic diversity, and substantial percentages of immigrant (first generation) families, most of the kinds of cultural issues this situation may present are not considered important limitations from a youth perspective.

Lowest Barriers Students Experience to Participating in Recreational and After School Activities:

1. The activity did not accommodate my cultural beliefs or practices (Only 3% of students reported this as a barrier to accessing their desired activities)
2. Language was a barrier to participating (5%)
3. There were not enough people of my gender (4%)
4. My parents did not approve of the activity (8%)

“It would be great to do something adventurous like camping! Everyone should do that once you know? You get to know people and spend time with your friends.” (Brampton, Female, COSTI Immigration Centre of Peel)

“Most people in after-school programs don’t want to be there because it’s boring. There’s nothing there that kids want to do.” (Mississauga, Male, BGCP Boys & Girls Club of Peel)

“The Hershey Centre is way too far. But it’s awesome, it’s like indoor fields and stuff. If it was closer I’d go way more. You can do summer stuff in winter.” (Mississauga, Male, Peel Youth Village)

Interestingly, while parents did not emerge as a substantial barrier to youth participation in the high school surveys, concerns of parents around safety and prioritizing their academic success were articulated frequently among youth in focus group discussions.

It would be useful to better understand the types of concerns parents have and the amount of influence they actually have on the choices of young people.

“I really like dancing, but it’s hard to keep involved because of homework and everything, so it’s more convenient on the weekends and stuff.” (Brampton, Female, COSTI Immigration Centre of Peel)

“We have like a yoga club at our school, it was like every Friday last year and it will probably start up again next semester. It was really fun and a lot of young women came out and guys too. Yeah that was our funnest programs so far.” (Mississauga, Female, Meadows Library Teen Advisory Group)

Socio-Demographic Differences in Youth Experiences of Barriers to Activity Participation:

Barriers to participation are not the same for all youth and we do see some interesting differences between and among them. As it turns out, gender, grade (age), ethnicity and family composition influence the specific sorts of things that prevent certain youth from greater engagement in recreational and after school opportunities.

For example, students from East, West and South Asian backgrounds tell us they experience slightly more barriers to participation than do other students, especially in terms of language being a problem (11% East Asian; 11% West Asian%; 5% South Asian; 1% North American) and the location of recreational activities that are too far away to easily access (27% East Asian; 26% West Asian%; 22% South Asian; 20% North American; 9% African) Not surprisingly, Grade 12

students are much more likely to report the barrier of having a part-time job and not being able to participate than grade 9 students (5% vs. 32%).

“For me it’s anything other than sports (that parents support) mostly because they’re paranoid about me getting hurt.” (Mississauga, Female, Churchill Meadows Library Teen Advisory Group)

“My parents worry about me because they want me to be safe. They want me to come straight home after school.” (Mississauga, Male, Youth Dam)

“For me, my Mom supports my activities, but I have a lot of friends who can’t do a lot of activities because there will be guys there or not even really the money but I find think a lot of kids are being sheltered these days where they aren’t allowed to go outside. They’re just allowed to come to and from school and they have to come straight home.” (Brampton, Female, Big Brothers Big Sisters)

“My parents don’t like when I’m doing too many activities, but for me I like to be involved in as many things as possible. They think I’m not getting enough school done.” (Mississauga, Male, Newcomer Centre of Peel)

“Unless it’s like academic related, they’re not going to support it. If I was going to join the mathletes or something they’re be 100% for it.” (Mississauga, Male, Boys & Girls Club of Peel)

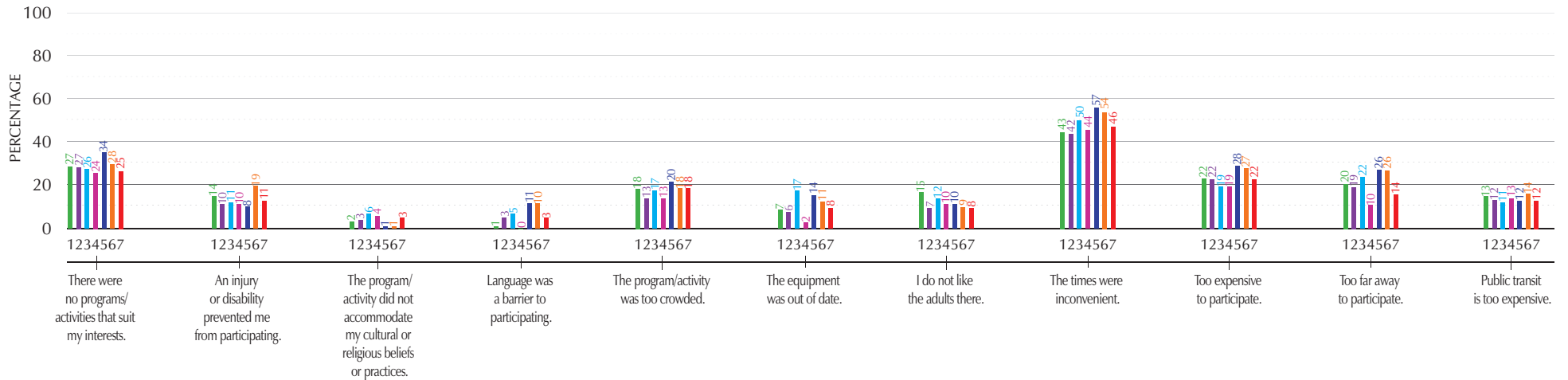
4.4

Barriers Youth Face to Participation in Activities

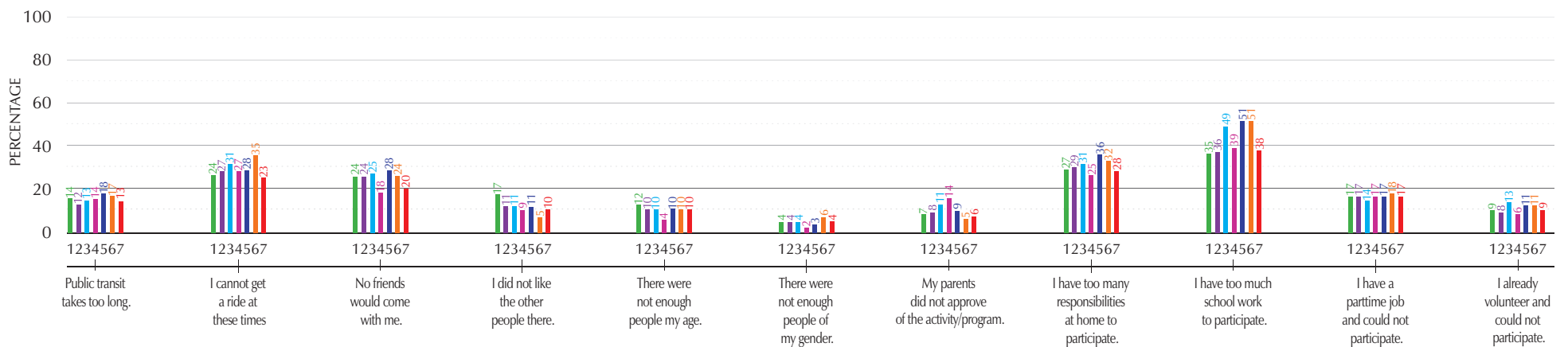
These plots show the probability of a student experiencing each item as a barrier to participation in activities along ethnic dimension, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

PLOT 20A. TOP BARRIERS BY ETHNICITY

Column Number: 1 North American 2 European 3 South Asian 4 African 5 East Asian 6 West Asian & Arab 7 Multiple



PLOT 20B. TOP BARRIERS BY ETHNICITY



4.4

Barriers Youth Face to Participation in Activities

Compared to young men, we find that young women are limited by the amount of schoolwork and studying they do (52% young women vs. 33% young men); have many more responsibilities at home (36% vs. 24%); and are more likely to have a part-time job (19% vs. 14%). Not surprisingly, young women find programs are offered at inconvenient times more often than young men do (55% young women vs. 41% young men). Given the higher levels of social connectedness among young women (see Section 4.2) they are considerably less likely than young men to participate when their friends will not go with them (28% young women vs. 19% young men).

There are a number of barriers that equally impede the participation of young women and young men, like transportation, where the expense (24% vs. 21%) and time that transit takes (14% vs. 15%); and the inability to get a ride (31% vs. 24%) are barriers to engagement. In terms of existing programs, both

young men and young women report that crowding is a problem (17% vs. 16%); that they do not like the other participants (12% vs. 9%) or the adults (e.g., staff / volunteers) who are there (9% vs. 11%); and significant percentages report that what is available does not suit their interests (28% vs. 27%).

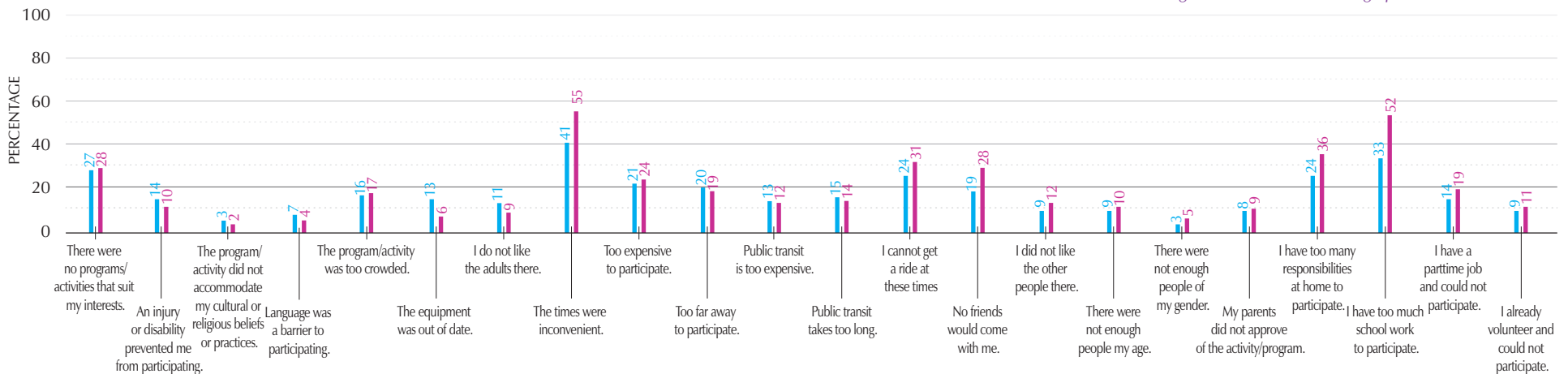
*“My mom, for sports teams and stuff, she doesn’t mind covering the cost. But when it comes to getting there, she can’t because she has work.”
(Mississauga, Male, Boys & Girls Club of Peel)*

*“It costs money to get onto the bus, and then to get into the community centre.”
(Mississauga, Male, Boys & Girls Club of Peel)*

The only measurably larger challenges faced by young men is finding language is a barrier (4% young women vs. 7% young men) and, perhaps because they are more likely to be engaged in moderate to intensive physical activity than young women, they more frequently find the equipment they are provided is out of date (6% young women vs. 13% young men).

*“People bump into each other and [are] hurting each other. Some kid got cut across his chest because there’s not enough room for both of them. The only good one (skate park) is really far, like 2 bus rides.”
(Mississauga, Male, Boys & Girls Club of Peel)*

PLOT 21. TOP BARRIERS BY GENDER ● MALES ● FEMALES



This plot shows the probability of a young man or young woman experiencing each item as a barrier to participation in activities, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

4.4

Barriers Youth Face to Participation in Activities

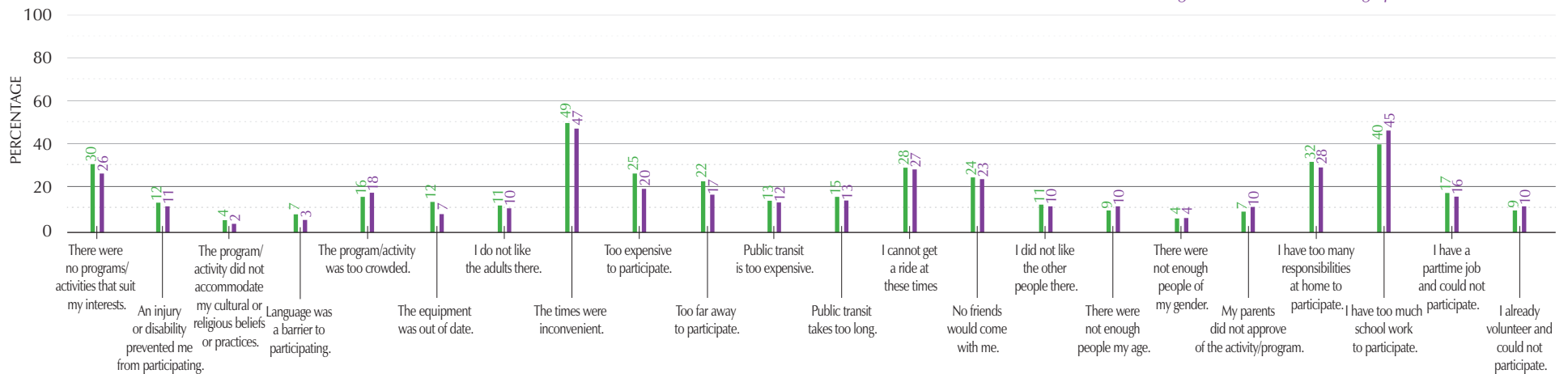
While there are (happily) a great deal of similarities between them, the data displayed in Plot 22 shows there are differences in the barriers that impact youth from single and two parents households. In general terms, students from single parent families do experience slightly more difficulties than students from two parent families in participating in healthy recreational activities after school.

Youth who live with a single parent are more likely than youth who live with two parents to find language to be a barrier (7% vs. 3%) and have more responsibilities at home (32% vs. 28%). Interestingly, youth from single parent families also tell us they are less likely than youth from two parent families to find something that suits their interests (30% youth from single family homes say there were no programs that suited their interest vs. 26% of youth from two parent homes) and are considerably more likely to feel that the equipment that is available is out of date (12% youth from single parent homes youth vs. 7% youth from two parent homes).



PLOT 22. TOP BARRIERS BY FAMILY TYPE

● SINGLE FAMILY ● TWO PARENT FAMILY



This plot shows the probability of a student experiencing each item as a barrier to participation in activities by family type, while controlling for all other socio-demographic differences.

4.5 Reaching Youth: Communicating about After School and Recreational Activities

If we hope to improve at engaging youth in Peel, it will come as no surprise to anyone who works with, or parents, a young person that we need to use new and different methods to reach them – to find them where they already are. As a part of this study we asked students about the ways they actually found out about the variety of activities that are currently available to them, and what methods of communication they would prefer: both important and relevant parts of the puzzle. (See Questions 18 and 19 in our appendix <http://www.pcyi.org/peel-student-research>).

Their experiences suggest that there is a bit of a disconnect between the methods currently being used to promote engagement / enrollment in activities and programs, and the channels they would ordinarily use or prefer to use. The ways youth do find out about activities, when they are interested enough, are not necessarily how they would prefer to be informed.

“Twitter is cool and fun and I love it, but at the same time it is really overwhelming. Things can get lost and it is difficult to sift through everything.”
 (Mississauga, Male, Newcomer Centre of Peel)

The student survey listed 13 possible modes of communication and asked the student to check each available option that they used to learn about what is happening after school.

The most used modes of communication students / youth use to find out about programs and activities:

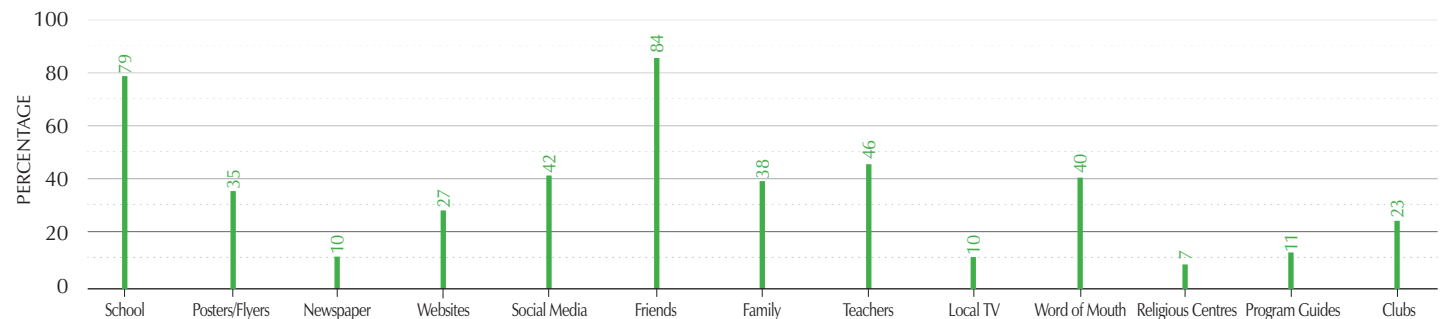
1. Friends (84% report using this method)
2. School (79%)
3. Teachers (46%)
4. Social Media (42%)

Students tend to rely heavily on their friends for information about activities that might interest them and we have seen how important the participation of their friends can be to their own engagement. At the same time, schools and teachers remain trusted and important

sources of information although it is unclear if this goes beyond in-school activities and includes community based and after school activities. Similarly, while friends are the best source of information, it is fairly likely that many of their recommendations are communicated using some form of social media.

The only noteworthy differences among youth communication preferences are between males and females. Male high school students are more inclined to rely on their school (44% young men vs. 56% young women) while young women are more likely to rely on their friends (45% young men vs. 55% young women) to help them identify recreational opportunities. Young men tend to look for posters and rely on their teachers more often than young women do to find out what is going on after school.

PLOT 23. MODE OF COMMUNICATION



This plot shows the percentage of students who selected each possible mode of communication as one of their currently used ways of communication about available activities.

4.5 Reaching Youth: Communicating about After School and Recreational Activities

The students were then given a list of 15 modes of communication and asked how they would like to learn about what is happening after school.

The top student preferences for information on after school opportunities:

1. School (67% would prefer to use this method of communication to find out about activities available to them)
2. Friends (59%)
3. Social Media (44%)
4. Teachers (44%)
5. Posters or Flyers (43%)
6. Websites (37%)
7. Religious Organizations (37%)

There is a considerable preference for social media to find out what is available compared to websites that provide information. Given that youth themselves control the content – including recommendations and criticisms – this preference is clearly aligned with broader changes in how we all communicate.

While it may be a product of conducting the survey in a school setting, youth have told us their schools and teachers still play a trusted role in terms of directing them to recreational and developmental opportunities. The challenge – and the opportunity – is to make sure these trusted sources know about and are able to share ideas and information about what might be going on for youth in their own neighbourhood and surrounding community as well as their immediate school environments.

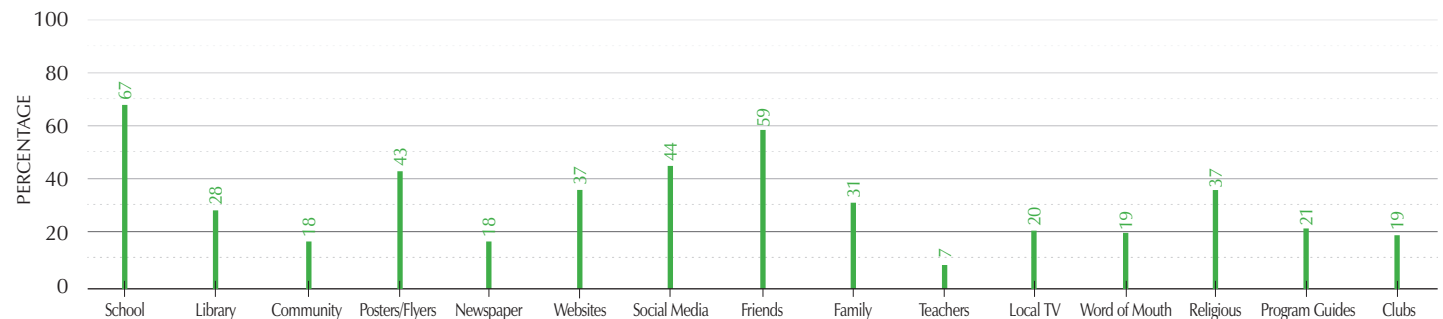
“I think that if they [opportunities] are available, maybe we’re not in the know of it that’s why maybe some people don’t attend it because they’re not really aware of it” (Mississauga, Female, Churchill Meadows Library Teen Advisory Group)

At the same time, we need to think about outreach strategies that go beyond web postings to include social media and the ability to let youth share their interests and experiences – both good and bad – with their friends.

“That’s the problem at UTM that all the groups advertise in their own ways so that things aren’t consistent for finding out about opportunities in the same way.” (Mississauga, Male, OUT@UTM).

“When I came here [to Canada] I didn’t know what soccer was but my friend told me and without him I would never have come out for soccer.” (Mississauga, Male, NCP)

PLOT 24. PREFERRED MODE OF COMMUNICATION



This plot shows the percentage of students who selected each possible mode of communication as one of their preferred modes of communication about available activities.

In the previous sections we have explored many of the social, recreational and developmental activities of youth in Peel and the results are encouraging.

Our young people are highly engaged in gaining a range of experiences and skills in different communities that promote personal growth and development. Here we examine the degree to which youth in high schools are involved in “risky behaviours” (e.g., those activities that may lead to some form of harm, now or in the future); of what nature; how this differs among different groups of youth; and how their likelihood of engaging in these behaviours relates to how frequently they participate in other sorts of more constructive activities.

It is important to say that while it would be preferable if youth avoided risky behaviours altogether – and many do – adolescence is a very common time for young people to experiment with new things that both promote and detract from health and wellbeing, and so the data are presented without judgment.

The data include feedback on nine known risky behaviours (See Question 25 in our appendix <http://www.pcyi.org/peel-student-research>) but it is important to acknowledge that with all self reported data, especially related to sensitive or even illegal subjects, the responses reflect what the students are willing to report (Gregson et al. 2002 and Plummer et al. 2004). Our focus group participants also expressed their opinions that student self-report data on drug use and similar types of behaviours is often inaccurate.

For example, our data suggest that the majority of students report never being involved in any of these behaviours. This may indeed be the case, as the findings align well with both the results from the Peel Student Health and the Ontario Student Drug Use Surveys (OSDUHS)

(http://www.camh.ca/en/research/news_and_publications/ontario-student-drug-use-and-health-survey/Pages/default.aspx). As a result, much of the analysis that follows focuses on the differences between and among groups of youth, involved with other activities to varying degrees, who do report engaging in any risky behaviours at all.

The students were given a list of nine potentially risky behaviours, including smoking, using drugs and fighting, and were asked to estimate how often they had done these things in the past school year. They rated each behavior on a six point scale ranging from never (0) to about once a month (3) to more than once a week (6).

Differences between and among youth

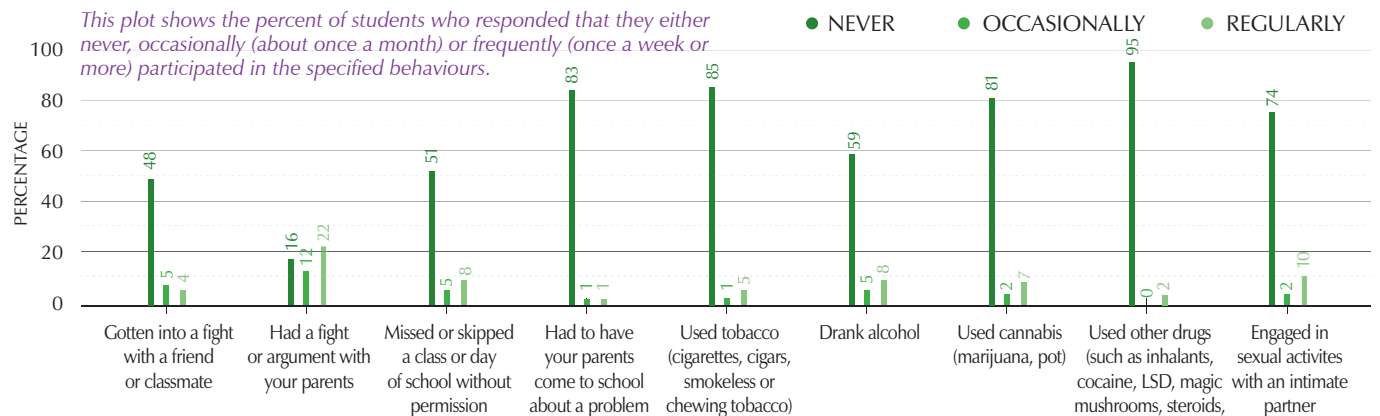
While there are some similarities across all youth, we do find that gender, age (grade) and the student’s immigration status play a role in the likelihood and the extent to which a young person will be participating in risky behaviours. The data also suggest that there is a relationship between the types of activities youth participate in, and the degree to which they engage in more risky behaviours. In short, participation in certain types of activities seems to be related to the reduction in the likelihood of youth engaging in risky behaviours.

Although these three main factors – age, immigration status, and gender – do play a role in the likelihood of engaging in risky behaviours, the relationships are fairly straightforward and do not vary much according

to specific types of behavior. Simply put, the older a student is, the more likely they are to engage in any and all of these behaviours; youth born in Canada are more likely to be involved than youth born outside Canada; and young men are more likely to participate than young women are – with the notable exception of fighting with parents (76% young men vs. 86% young women).

These findings in Peel are quite consistent with most of the available research on similar behaviours among youth populations in Canada. This includes both the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS), the Brampton Mississauga Caledon Public Health Survey (BMC) and the Peel Student Health Survey <http://www.peelregion.ca/health/health-status-report/studenthealth2011/>. For example, the OSDUHS shows that the majority of students are very rarely involved in most of these behaviours, including fighting with parents. The OSDUHS also shows that a significant increase in prescription drug and cannabis use among Ontario students as grades increase (OSDUHS, 2011, pg. 168, pg. 84, respectively) and the Brampton Mississauga Caledon (BMC) Public Health survey findings that young men are more involved in marijuana use (BMC Public Health, 2013: Pg 5), tobacco use (BMC Public Health, 2013: Pg 5), and binge alcohol drinking. (BMC Public Health, 2013: Pg. 5) As well, the OSDUHS find that 9% of high school students in Ontario smoke cigarettes at all while our data shows 12% of Peel high school students use tobacco, including cigarette, chewing tobacco and cigars.

PLOT 25. PERCENT OF STUDENTS THAT REPORT BEING INVOLVED WITH THESE BEHAVIOURS



4.6

Youth Engagement in Risky Behaviours - Parental Visits Based on Activity

Activity Group Differences in Youth Participation in Risky Behaviours

Asking youth about these sorts of behaviours allows to us to see if there are any relationships between how they spend their time and the likelihood they will engage in risky activities. The data allow us to see if youth that participate in certain types of activities – social, work, recreational and personal development – are more or less likely to engage in risky behaviours; and to see if their levels of participation (low, moderate and high) have any effect on this relationship. This is a unique opportunity to see if there is a relationship between the types of constructive activities youth engage in and the likelihood they will participate in risky behaviours.

The feedback from youth shows two things clearly: gender (young men) and participation in recreational activities can strongly influence the degree to which high school students will engage in risky behaviours. For example, *getting into arguments with parents* is more common among youth that work a lot. There are a number of other interesting relationships between activity categories and risky behaviours, and these sorts of activities are demonstrated in the graphs below.

Having parents come to school for a problem: was more frequent among students with an average amount of social activity; and much less frequent among those who work a lot.

“I think sometimes when there are like four, five, six of us, something bad is bound to happen. Sometimes we bring it upon ourselves but sometimes it just happens. Like you go to the convenience store and the guy is staring you down because he thinks you’re going to rob him just because we’re youth.”
(Brampton, Female, Big Brothers Big Sisters)



This plot shows the how often a student is likely to have a parent come to school for a problem by how frequently they participate in different types of activities.

PLOT 26. PERCENT OF STUDENTS HAVING PARENTS COME TO SCHOOL BY ACTIVITY GROUP



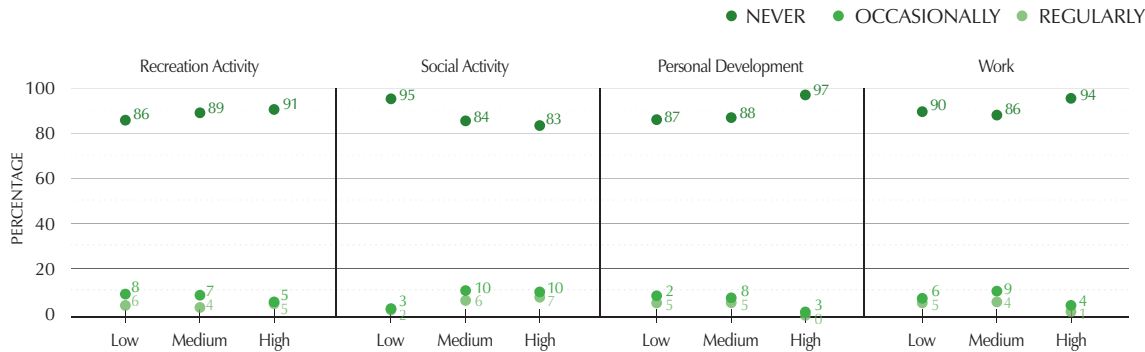
4.6

Youth Engagement in Risky Behaviours - Tobacco & Alcohol

Using Tobacco:

The activity group with the greatest likelihood of smoking tobacco is the group containing youth who have part-time jobs that consume a moderate amount of their time. Perhaps not surprisingly, the use of tobacco was also more frequently reported by those students who participate, either moderately or highly, in social activities. Conversely, we find that young people who are frequently involved in recreational activities are among the least likely to report smoking, along with those students who spend a lot of time engaged in personal development programs.

PLOT 27. PERCENT OF STUDENTS *USED TOBACCO*

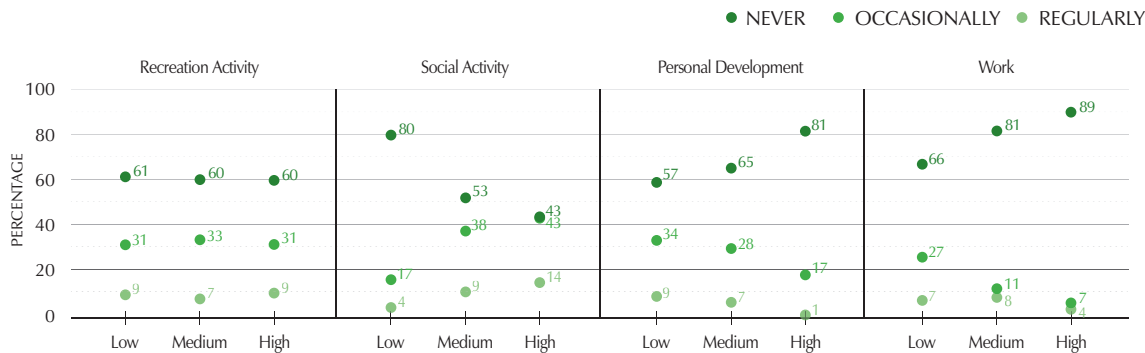


This plot shows how often a student is likely to use tobacco by how frequently they participate in different types of activities.

Using Alcohol:

There is a strong association between the extent to which youth engage in social activities (e.g., frequently) and the likelihood that they will report alcohol use. Students who work a lot and those who participate often in personal development activities are among the least likely to drink. Interestingly, participation in recreational programs has no noticeable effect on whether a student is likely to consume alcohol.

PLOT 28. PERCENT OF STUDENTS *USED ALCOHOL*



This plot shows how often a student is likely to use alcohol by how frequently they participate in different types of activities.

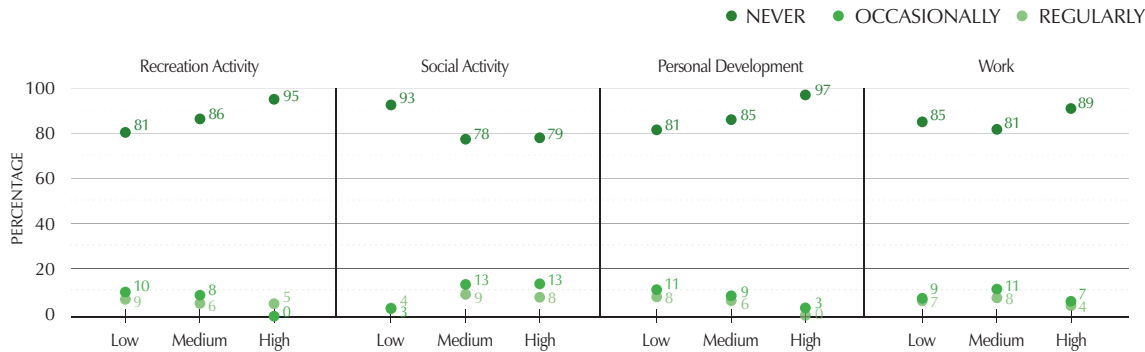
4.6

Youth Engagement in Risky Behaviours - Cannabis & Sexual Activity

Using Cannabis:

The students who participate either moderately or highly in social activities are more likely to report using more cannabis than those who participate little in social activities. Those who work part-time moderately show a slightly higher rate of pot smoking than those who work part-time frequently. Once again the data show that as the frequency of participation in personal development activities increases, we see decreased levels of cannabis use.

PLOT 29. PERCENT OF STUDENTS *USED CANNABIS*

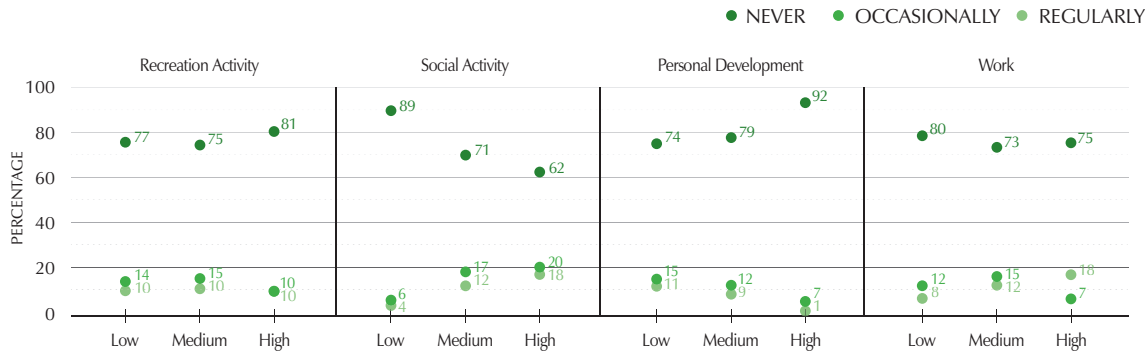


This plot shows how often a student is likely to use cannabis by how frequently they participate in different types of activities.

Engaging in Sexual Activities:

Students with high rates of participation in social activities report that they are more likely to engage in sex as youth who work a lot. Interestingly, those youth who are highly involved in recreation are less sexually active than those who report only moderate participation in recreation. Youth involved in a lot of personal development activities are once again, among the least likely to be engaged in sex.

PLOT 30. PERCENT OF STUDENTS *ENGAGED IN SEXUAL ACTIVITY*



This plot shows how often a student is likely to be engaged in sexual activity by how frequently they participate in different types of activities.

4.6

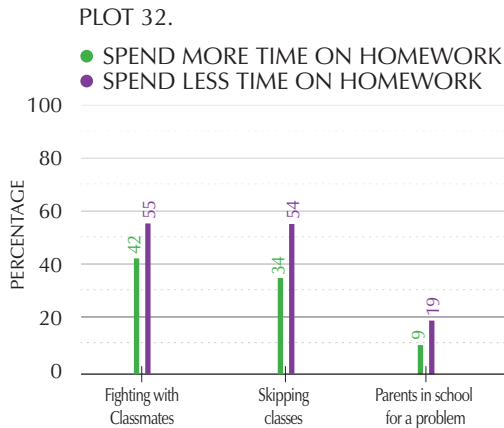
Youth Engagement in Risky Behaviours - Other Interesting Associations

Other Interesting Associations between Activities and Risky Behaviours

When we take a look at individual activities – rather than activity grouping categories – we find three activities that are strongly associated, both positively and negatively with participation in risky behaviours. As the following three charts demonstrate, youth who regularly attend a place of worship for programs or activities, and those young people who spend a lot of time doing homework, are not as likely to engage in a number of different risky behaviours. Conversely, youth who spend a great deal of their time in front of screens (e.g., tv, computer, etc.) are more likely become engaged in some of these sorts of activities.

Homework:

Youth who spend an above average amount of hours per day on homework are less likely to be involved in some types of risky behaviours. Certain types of youth tell us they are more likely to spend time doing homework, including youth who are newcomers and young women.



This plot shows how often a student is likely to be engaged in each risky behaviour by the amount of time they spend doing homework.

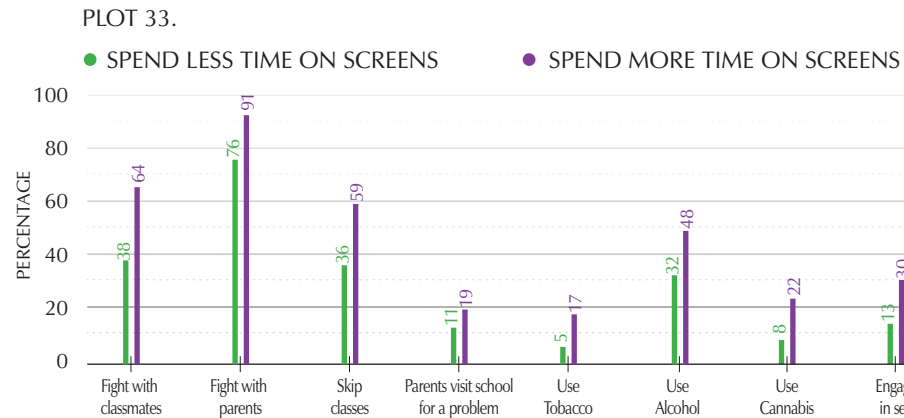
Faith:

Youth who regularly attend places of worship for programs and activities are less likely to engage in a number of risky behaviours. This is significant as approximately 11% of all youth in Peel do participate in activities with their faith communities, more frequently including youth from West Asian and Arab backgrounds.



Time On Screen:

Youth who spend a lot of time (several hours or more each day) in front of screens are more likely to be involved in some types of risky behaviours. These youth will more often include Canadian born and males.



This plot shows how often a student is likely to be engaged in each risky behaviour by the number of hours a youth spends watching screens (i.e. computers, video games, watching movies and TV).

Exploring the relationships between the types of activities youth are engaged in, their participation in risky behaviours and their socio-demographic characteristics, provides some real insight into which particular young people are more or less inclined to participate in these sorts of activities.

In order to get a better picture of how “all youth” are doing in terms of participation in after school and recreational activities, the data were analyzed controlling for all socio-demographic differences among young people. This allowed us to create a series of profiles that indicate real-world patterns of engagement among our youth.

A cluster analysis algorithm was used to sort the high school students into three general groups or “participation profiles” based on their participation in similar types of activities and how frequently they are engaged. Level One includes all those youth who participate in the fewest number of activities with the lowest levels of frequency, while Level Three includes young people who participate extensively in a wide range of activities quite regularly (see Tables below). This provides a picture of all those youth who have similar patterns of activity; experience the same barriers; and express the same interests – none of which is attributable to their particular socio-economic circumstances.

Differences Between and Among Participation Profiles

There are certainly some noticeable differences between those youth who are very regularly engaged in after school and recreational activities and those who are not actively or extensively engaged. The following plots outline some the differences between youth who are very active (Level 3) and those that are less active (Level 1) in terms of how they spend their time; the sorts of activities that would appeal to them; and the sorts of barriers to participation they are likely to experience.

Participation Profiles:

Level Three - Students With Higher Participation Profiles

Spend more time on:

1. Talking on phone to friends
2. Moderate physical activity
3. Intense physical activity
4. Napping

Spend less time on:

1. Reading books for fun
2. Watching TV and movies
3. Surfing Internet
4. Playing video games

Participation Profiles:

Level One – Youth with lower Participation Profiles

Spend more time on:

1. Homework and studying
2. Watching TV or movie
3. Surfing the Internet and Social Media
4. Playing Video Games

Spend less time on:

1. Reading books for fun
2. Participating in Physical Activities
3. Participating in Moderate Activities
4. Working

It seems clear that those students with the highest participation profiles are physically active when they're not in school and avoid spending their time on videos or surfing the net. On the other hand, young people with low participation profiles avoid most exercise and when they are not studying, they spend their time in front of screens.

Activities Students Want by Student Participation Profile Groupings

The data show a certain number of similarities between the preferences of activities that youth with higher and lower levels of participation would like to do after school. Although there are some differences in how the two groups would prioritize these alternatives, there are similarities overall in the actual activities both groups indicated they would prefer.

The number one interest of all youth, regardless of their participation profile, involves opportunities to learn about cooking. Activities that include learning about art and music are also a common interest among the two groups as well as participating in new and different kinds of sports. A main difference is the interest of more active youth in internships and job shadowing, and that less frequently engaged youth would value an opportunity to experience field trips.

What we do see again, regardless of how engaged youth already are, is a significant disconnect between the types of activities youth would enjoy and what is commonly available, regardless of how engaged they already are.

Participation Profiles:

Level Three - Students With Higher Participation Profiles

1. Cooking (57%)
2. Fine arts (43%)
3. Musical instruments (42%)
4. Field trips (34%)
5. New sports (34%)

Participation Profiles:

Level One – Youth with lower Participation Profiles

1. Cooking (66%)
2. New sports (58%)
3. Internships or job shadowing (53%)
4. Musical instruments (52%)
5. Fine arts (46%)

*On being not interested in the programs offered: “Most people in after-school programs don’t want to be there because it’s boring. There’s nothing there that kids want to do. Everything that’s there can be found elsewhere. Might as well go smoke or do something else, because there’s nothing that interests me in that program.”
(Mississauga, Male, Boys & Girls Club of Peel)*

Barriers to Activity Participation by Student Participation Profile Grouping

Section 4.4 examines the barriers to participation in recreational activities after school and the extent to which they impact participation between and among different groups of young people. When we take a look at how (and which) barriers differ between those youth who participate least frequently (Level One) and those who participate extensively (Level Three), we do see some differences.

Not surprisingly perhaps, we find that young people who are already actively engaged seem to struggle primarily with other obligations like work (3% for lower activity students vs. 18% for highest activity students) and volunteering (8% vs. 15%), and find the time required to use public transit to get to and from activities to be problematic (12% vs. 17%). Interestingly, very active youth are also more likely to be injured or disabled in some fashion than youth who are not engaged (9% vs. 14%).

Youth who are among the least frequent participants in after school activities are more concerned with program delivery and content than highly engaged youth. These youth tell us they are less engaged because they cannot find programs or activities that align with their interests (33% for lower activity students vs. 22% for higher activity youth), and are not really comfortable with the people who are there (13% vs. 8%).

Participation Profiles:

Level Three - Students With Higher Participation Profiles

1. Part-time job prevents participation (15% higher experience of this barrier than students with low activity profiles)
2. Already volunteer and couldn't participate (7% higher experience of this barrier than students with low activity profiles)
3. Injury or disability (5% higher experience of this barrier than students with low activity profiles)
4. Public transit takes too long (5% higher experience of this barrier than students with low activity profiles)

Participation Profiles:

Level One – Youth with lower Participation Profiles

1. No programs that suit interests (11% higher experience of this barrier than students with high activity profiles)
2. I did not like the people there (5% higher experience of this barrier than students with high activity profiles)

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

What Do We Know About the After School Experiences of Young People in Peel

5.1 What Do We Know About the After School Experiences of Young People in Peel?

The opportunity to really understand the behaviours, ideas, challenges and interests of youth is particularly important at a time when renewed efforts are being made locally and provincially to find better ways to support and engage young people. This kind of population based study is particularly helpful as it gives policy makers, funders and service providers the unique opportunity to hear from a truly representative sample of **all youth** in Peel – including those who are not engaged or participating in any meaningful way.



Youth have told us how often they participate and in what sorts of activities; how they actually spend their out of school time; the sorts of programs and opportunities they would like to enjoy; the practical constraints they face; how they find out (and would like to find out) about what is available for them; and the extent to which they participate in undesirable or risky behaviours. The specific feedback from youth provides an opportunity to see how and where there are notable differences between and among young people with differing socio-economic and cultural characteristics. While these findings were

absolutely critical to the development of some of the recommendations included in PCYI's Recreation and After School Strategy (RASS), this analysis of youth in Peel, based on their real life circumstances and experiences, stands alone as a reliable, informative and valuable tool for all those with an interest in the success of young people.

There are more specific findings in each of the sections, but here we present some of the overarching themes from what youth have told us and, with the help of young people, offer a sense of where there are opportunities for action. While these suggestions provide some clear directions and are rooted in the evidence, our many community partners that work with, or support, youth engagement will want to review this research to identify the implications, challenges and opportunities that are important to their own organizations and services.

Youth in Peel differ: Although there are quite a number of common themes that arise from this study and there are certainly shared interests, youth in Peel vary in a number of important and interesting ways. In almost every area of this research we find marked differences between males and females, including how they spend their time, their responsibilities and the activities in which they choose to participate. Similarly, there are significant differences between younger and older students as engagement and participation levels increase at the very same time as their obligations to work, sibling care, volunteering and studying, etc. grow. Participation in risky behaviours and finding the time to socialize with friends also increases steadily with age.

While there are some noteworthy differences between youth from different backgrounds captured in the report, these are most noticeable in terms of how youth who were born outside of Canada spend their time compared to their Canadian born peers. There are fairly minor differences in terms of participa-

tion levels and the choice of activities.

We can also see the effect of family structure on how young people use their time and the types of activities in which they participate. Youth from single parent homes spend more time in front of screens than youth from two parent families. They also spend less time on homework, less time engaging in intense physical activities and less of their out-of-school time in recreational activities.

Serving Peel's diverse youth: The findings from PCYI's Parent Survey Research showed that ethnicity and immigration status were the strongest factors influencing participation levels among families with younger children (0-12). In fact, some newcomer families took up to five years to participate at rates similar to Canadian born parents.

Youth in Peel however have told us that effects of immigration status and ethnicity are fairly small and that for the most part, youth who were born outside of Canada are engaged and participating at levels that equal or exceed their Canadian born counterparts – including levels of moderate and intense physical activity. And while they have fewer part time jobs, youth from immigrant families are more likely to be doing volunteer work, spending more time studying (which may be language related) and are less likely than youth born in Canada to engage in risky kinds of behaviours. Interestingly, when youth told us about the kinds of activities they would enjoy, there were no significant differences in their preferences that related to their country of origin or their cultural backgrounds.

While there are some challenges around language, the vast majority of young people have told us that they do not frequently perceive culture or gender as barriers to their participation in programs and activities. The notion that girls from immigrant families face unique cultural or religious barriers to participation is not supported by the data and in cases where parents do not

5.1 What Do We Know About the After School Experiences of Young People in Peel?

allow young people to participate in something (less than 10% of the time) there is no statistical association with any particular ethnic or cultural background.

Young women are doing well: When we look at the differences in how boys and girls spend their time and the activities they participate in, there are several indications that girls are doing quite well. Compared to young men, we find that young women play more team sports at school; are more involved in extra classes and tutoring; more likely to work part time, provide sibling care, and volunteer; and they are more likely to spend their social time with friends in the company of an adult. The data does not support the common assumption that girls are not

being allowed to participate in activities much more than boys. In terms of the sorts of activities they might enjoy after school, girls were more interested and keen to participate in almost every opportunity that was suggested. They were considerably more willing to work with other youth on a community project or special issue and were more interested in career development opportunities like job shadowing, internships and the chance to learn more about colleges and universities. Female students are also much more likely to be doing homework after school than their male counterparts (54% vs. 31%), who are four times more likely to be playing video games. Given their interests and how they actually spend their time, we find girls are less likely to be engaged in any type of risky behavior than boys

with one notable exception: fighting with their parents. While these are all positive indicators of how well girls are doing – and likely to do in the future – we do find that female youth are considerably less likely than boys to be engaged in any kind of physical activity (moderate or intense) during high school and are more reluctant to attend local community centres for programs. In terms of overall engagement in after school and recreational activities, there are certain groups of young women, including those with South Asian, West Asian and Arab backgrounds, who participate slightly less than the average young person.



Opportunity

Consider providing additional female focused recreational activities – that includes physical activity – during out of school time.

Religious organizations play an important role: The numbers of youth in Peel who participate at least once a week in an organized program at a ‘church mosque or temple’ is really quite significant. Approximately 11% of young people in high school rely on these groups for their activities, including girls and boys in roughly equal numbers, with participation rates that remain fairly stable as they get older. Largely run by volunteers, these programs are now supporting at least 8,300 youth every week across Peel.

In fact, participation levels with religious organizations exceed the total percentage of youth who regularly attend programming at all the other community organizations combined (e.g. Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers and Big Sisters) although participation at some of these organizations tends to naturally decline as students get older. Seven percent (7%) of all young people currently find out about activities that are available to them through a religious organization and a significant percentage of young people (37%) regard these organizations as a preferred way to find out about might be available. In short, religious organizations play a very significant role in making recreational and developmental opportunities available to young people across Peel Region.

*“Healthy living young women club is fun, every week on Mondays we meet up for about two hours and we have a different activity every week like self defense or playing games, Zumba, cooking class.”
 (Brampton, Female, COSTI Immigration Centre of Peel).*

Opportunities

Find ways to better support program quality, training and human resource capacities of those religious organizations that are providing recreational activities for youth on regular basis.

Ensure religious organizations are included equally in funding opportunities to provide (non-denominational) youth programs and activities.

Other youth serving organizations and recreational providers should develop closer relationships with religious organizations as an effective place to communicate, engage, and potentially enroll youth in other healthy, constructive activities.

Alignment with Peel’s Kids Participate:

A Recreation and After School Strategy (2013-18)

Recommendation 1: Support efforts to streamline and integrate registration for recreation and after school programs.

Recommendation 6: Explore the feasibility of a Regional network to share common professional development and human resources among all after school and recreation providers.



Risky Behaviours: As much as participating in risky behaviours is a natural part of adolescence, a significant number of youth in Peel tell us they do not engage (or are unwilling to report engaging) in any of the things we asked about (Section 4.6). The information youth did share however provides some important insights and there are several interesting relationships between the types of activities youth enjoy and the frequency of their participation, with the likelihood of their involvement in these sorts of behaviours.

Bearing in mind these are statistically significant associations (not cause and effect relationships), we do see the participation levels of youth in certain types of activities increasing or decreasing the likelihood of their participation in risky behaviours. The bad news for parents is that simply keeping your children busy in a wide range of activities will not, in and of itself, make a difference in the likelihood they will participate in a number of undesirable activities.

For example, although youth who participate regularly and frequently in traditional recreation programs will smoke tobacco and cannabis less frequently, they are just as likely as their peers to drink alcohol or engage in sex. Young people that are highly engaged and spend a lot of time in social activities are more likely to smoke tobacco and cannabis, drink and engage in sex than those who are less engaged – though the overall percentages are still small. While it is not desirable from a developmental perspective, the less socially active a young person is, the less likely they are to be involved in any risky behaviours.

Opportunities

Re-iterate to parents the important association between youth who engage in a significant amount of 'screen time' and the likelihood of their participation in wide range of risky behaviours.

Physical activity rates are low: When we look at what youth in high school have told us about their activities (both good and bad), their levels of engagement and the kinds of things they would like to do, the results suggest young people in Peel are a fairly responsible, busy and community minded group. That said, we do not see a lot of participation in the kinds of regular physical activity that is so important for the health and well being of young people.

Only one in three (35%) are engaged in intense physical activity for an hour each day – the recommended amount of activity for all children and youth. While it may be the same young people, we see a similar percentage (32%) getting some form of moderate daily exercise like walking or riding a bike. To put it in context, youth in Peel are more likely to spend their time hanging out with friends, talking on the phone, watching TV, and surfing the internet. They are just as likely to spend their time going to the mall (31%) or having a nap (33%) as they are to participate in any form of physical activity, moderate or intense.

In terms of physical activities, the differences between male and female youth are striking. Young women in Peel are considerably less likely to engage in any form of intense physical activity (25% vs. 45%) and even moderate activity (27% vs. 37%) and are also less likely to go to their local community centres. Given these percentages – especially among females – it should come as no surprise that the 2012 Peel Health Student Survey found that youth across the region have above average body mass indices (BMI) and are not as healthy as they might be. At the same time, youth in high schools, both boys and girls, have told us they are very interested in 'learning a new sport' (note: not competing) and this is especially true of young people who have the lowest participation profiles.

Opportunity

Schools, community centers and youth serving organizations should make special efforts to engage young women in activities that include physical activity – preferably intense (e.g. homework / workout club).

Improving Youth Opportunities for Engagement

Peel's youth are busy after school: Although this study was initially interested in identifying opportunities to improve the participation and activity levels of youth during the after school period, the reality of young people provides some clearer direction. While there are opportunities during the 3pm-6pm window, particularly if we can better align programs with interests, young people have a lot of other commitments after school, including part-time work, school work and responsibilities at home. This is true for older youth and particularly females in senior grades as homework, the pressure to succeed at school and prepare for post secondary education also increases. In fact, significant percentages of youth attending high school in Peel are working part time after school (31%); volunteering (22%) and almost one in four (male and female) are providing sibling care (24%). While young people still manage to spend a significant amount of time socializing and communicating with friends, the key takeaway is clear: young people are busy after school (3-6pm).

It should come as no surprise then that young people tell us participating during the after school time period is problematic, and almost half of them (48%) tell us a critical barrier to their engagement is the inconvenient times programs are offered. We also heard in the focus group sessions that young people feel they need more open access to resources in their communities (e.g. schools and community centres) and opportunities to participate in programs that do not require registration or ongoing attendance (i.e. drop in programs).

One of the other clear messages from youth was their interest in having safe places to simply “hangout,” participate in activities if they wanted to and socialize with friends. This finding is echoed in the provincial “Stepping Up” report that recommends “support(ing) young people by investing in positive, pro-social opportunities for (them) to connect in safe environments includ(ing) community hubs, drop-in centres, recreational facilities, libraries and many other public areas that are inviting and accepting of young people.”

Opportunities

Develop and support additional opportunities for youth to participate during “out of school time” including evenings, weekends and holidays, including increased access to local facilities (e.g. schools, community centers, libraries, community housing, YMCA, etc.).

Support the provision of additional drop-in and informal opportunities for youth to engage in healthy recreational activities both after school and during out of school time.

*Alignment with Peel’s Kids Participate:
 A Recreation and After School Strategy (2013-18)*

Recommendation 11: *Identify opportunities to better use existing infrastructure to support local and neighbourhood based opportunities during out of school time.*

Aligning programs and youth interests: One of the clearest messages from our youth is a lack of alignment between what is available to them by way of after school activities – and what they are actually interested in doing. Even where there are opportunities that might better fit their interests, this information may not reach young people effectively, especially given the way the way they find out about things (schools, friends, and social media). In fact, almost 30% of all high school students tell

us they do not participate in recreational and developmental activities after school because there is ‘nothing that suits their interests’. This is particularly true of young people with low participation profiles.

*“Most people in after-school programs don’t want to be there because it’s boring. There’s nothing there that kids want to do.”
 (Mississauga, Male, Boys & Girls Club of Peel)*

It is also clear, based on the actual activities of young people after school, that they are fairly busy at this time with other responsibilities and as mentioned, almost half of all the young people in Peel (48%) tell us the times when most programs are available are not convenient for them. To complicate matters, using transit and /or getting a ride at that time of day, presents a significant obstacle for many of our youth.

“I really like dancing, but it’s hard to keep involved because of homework and everything, so it’s more convenient on the weekends and stuff.” (Brampton, Female, COSTI Immigration Centre of Peel)

When we inquired about the kinds of things young people would be interested in, there is considerable consensus, with a few differences between males and females and between those who participate actively and those with low participation profiles. Young women tell us they are more willing to partici-

pate in almost all the potential after school activities that were suggested (n = 15); significantly more interested in cooking; working cooperatively with others in their communities or on an issue; and opportunities related to the arts and culture.

When we listen to youth with higher and lower levels of participation, there are some differences in the order of their preferences, but four of their five interests – cooking, arts, music, and sports – are the same. Interestingly, greater percentages of youth with low participation profiles expressed their willingness to participate in all of these potential activities and included ‘opportunities to do internships and job shadowing’ (53%) higher on their list of preferences. It is also noteworthy that opportunities to ‘learn a new sport’ were very important to youth with low participation profiles, second on their list of preferences (58%).

The most frequently expressed interests for high school youth in Peel, in terms of possible programs and activities during out of school time were, in order of preference:

1. Learning how to cook new and interesting foods – 60%
2. Learn how to play a musical instrument, sing, or record music – 48%
3. Learn a new sport – 46%
4. Work in an internship or learn about a career – 44%
5. Learn about and practice fine arts (e.g. drawing, painting, visual media, film) – 39%
6. Learn about different kinds of careers, colleges and universities – 43%

It is noteworthy, that in a Region as diverse as Peel, there were no significant differences between the interests of young people based on their country of origin or cultural backgrounds.

While this list of the actual preferences and interests of young people presents some clear opportunities, they are not without new challenges. Cooking, for instance, is incredibly popular but most existing food preparation facilities are not set up for this kind of programming and staff that could provide this kind of activity are currently quite scarce. Developing musical opportunities for youth is equally challenging on a number of levels and the work to create more internships and career learning opportunities will require new partnerships and contributions from different kinds of organizations – including the private sector.

There is an increasing number of arts and culture related activities across Peel that are intended for youth during out of school time, including classes, camps and special events, and organizations from these sectors might be more easily engaged. In terms of learning about ‘careers, colleges and universities’, the Region of Peel is lucky to have a significant post secondary education sector and it would seem that increasing opportunities to learn more about post secondary options and careers would not only align with the interests of young people, it is also good long term business development. Improving the numbers of these sorts of opportunities might be easier to manage than addressing some of the other interests of youth, which will require the development of new capacities.

It is critical to recognize that most of the groups who currently provide after school and out of school time activities and programs for youth already struggle to find the resources they need and little or no underutilized capacity. If these sorts of programs are to be developed, funding criteria will need to better reflect the actual preferences of youth and new partnerships will need to be cultivated at a systems level – that can then be accessed by schools, community groups, youth service providers and interested religious organizations – at the local level.

There are opportunities here to better engage private sector organizations who are interested in supporting young people, especially including cooking, (e.g. where these facilities can be used off hours) and in helping to provide additional internships and other experiences to learn about potential careers.

Opportunities

New and existing facilities that serve youth should develop ways and consider capital investments to help provide opportunities to learn about cooking interesting and healthy foods.

Given the interest level of youth, consider providing opportunities to “learn a new sport”, preferably in a non-competitive environment, through community centers and sports associations.

Opportunities to participate in the arts (painting, sculpting, drama, etc.) are a key interest for many youth. New partnerships should be encouraged and funding made available to allow young people greater access to these sorts of activities

Provide a greater number of varied opportunities for youth to find out about education in their schools, courses, learning and career opportunities through postsecondary institutions in Peel Region.

Review and amend criteria for groups that provide funding for youth related activities, to better reflect the actual interests (and preferred times) of young people.

Alignment with Peel’s Kids Participate:

A Recreation and After School Strategy (2013-18)

Recommendation 8: *Facilitate ongoing youth engagement: youth volunteerism, mentorship and community involvement*

Recommendation 14: *Support strategies to create additional after school and out of school time funding support including*

opportunities for private sector participation

Recommendation 17: *Help to ensure, with youth input, that programs offered are fun, stimulating and offer opportunities for personal growth*

Transportation is an issue: It is critical to acknowledge there have been efforts made by the municipalities to keep transportation costs from rising for young people, often as part of a larger effort to support youth participation (e.g. Mississauga Youth Plan).

The experiences of youth suggest it would be enormously beneficial, in terms of their ability to participate, if community partners would work together to create additional and affordable transportation options that are specifically designed to support after school activities and recreational opportunities during out of school time. Transportation continues to be a significant barrier for many youth: 12% tell us the expense of transit is a problem; 14% find it takes too long; and 28% simply say they cannot get ‘a ride at these times’, when many parents are still at work. When the cost of transportation are added into the costs of program registration – a barrier for 22% of youth on its own – access becomes even more difficult.

While the data was analyzed from a Regional perspective, we know from youth focus groups and feedback from community partners that the transportation challenge in Caledon is particularly problematic. In fact, focus group participants suggested their inability to get to recreational opportunities in that municipality effectively increased their participation in other less desirable (risky) behaviours.

*“It costs money to get onto the bus, and then to get into the community centre.”
(Mississauga, Male, Boys & Girls Club of Peel)*

Opportunities

Late buses that are currently used for youth on sports teams could be extended to transport youth who attend programming after school hours.

Consider the development of a transportation pass that is linked directly to participation in healthy recreational activities (e.g. to and from community centers during specified hours).

Alignment with Peel's Kids Participate:

A Recreation and After School Strategy (2013-18)

Recommendation 10: Review opportunities to expand supportive transportation strategies for youth

Social media strategies will help: When we asked youth about how they currently – and how they would prefer – to find out about after school activities and opportunities, there were also some clear directions. In terms of what they actually do, we find that the Program Guides put out by recreation providers are actually among the least used sources of information for youth, along with newspapers and even television. In practice, young people do not use websites as a source of information as much as might be imagined (only 27%).

In terms of how young people would prefer to find out what is available, schools are critical (see below) but friends and social media (and the likely combination of both) are very popular alternatives. We also know that 23% of youth are unlikely to join in any particular activity when they are unable to get their friends involved.

“I think that if they [opportunities] are available, maybe we’re not in the know of it that’s why maybe some people don’t attend it because they’re not really aware of it”

(Mississauga, Female, CM-TAGS)

Opportunities

Municipal recreation departments may want to consider the value (relative to the costs) of producing program guides.

Support the (ongoing) development of a Region wide “Recreation APP” with social media capacity that would direct youth to - and allow them to comment on and register for - all the available recreational, arts, culture, drop-in and other program opportunities in Peel Region.

Alignment with Peel's Kids Participate:

A Recreation and After School Strategy (2013-18)

Recommendation 1: Support efforts to streamline and integrate registration for recreation and after school programs.

Schools play an important role: It is critical to acknowledge at the outset that education systems and local schools are continually asked to “partner” with other groups to help address a particular social, community, health or other related issue. In this instance, however, there are real and measureable benefits for schools when greater percentages of their students are engaged in healthy (especially active) recreational activities, including better grade attainment, reduced criminality, improved physical/mental health, etc. (J.J. Ratey; ‘Spark’, 2008). As schools struggle to provide and sustain after school activities, the opportunity to link and partner with other youth serving community organizations could prove to be very helpful

Youth were very clear about this: schools and teachers are, and remain, very trusted sources of information about the kinds of activities that are available. Students tell us they currently rely most heavily on their friends (84%); their schools (79%); their teachers (46%) and social media (42%) to identify these kinds of opportunities. When we asked youth how they would prefer to find out about what is happening schools and teachers are

still two of the top four preferences. Even in-school posters and flyers (43%) were preferred (especially by boys) over websites (37%) and a host of other options – including family!

What is much less clear, is the extent to which schools and teachers are aware of, and able to effectively share, those healthy recreational and developmental opportunities that are available outside the school system provided by local community partners. Similarly, schools offer ideal locations to address the transportation challenges of many youth and are trusted by parents, but are much less accessible to youth during ‘out of school’ time (nights, weekends, holidays) than immediately after school (3-6pm) when many young people are already quite busy.

In terms of actual participation levels we find younger students generally participate in organized after school activities less than older students even though they have fewer obligations and responsibilities. It is also clear that certain groups of young women are not as engaged as an average student, including girls with South Asian, West Asian and Arab backgrounds.

Opportunities

Improve the connectedness and communication between local schools and area community service providers to improve the awareness of – and opportunities to join – developmental and recreational activities available outside the education system.

Special efforts should be made to increase the engagement and participation rates of younger students (grade 9) and girls with South Asian, West Asian and Arab backgrounds.

In the construction of new schools (or renovations) consider using a design that will allow the cafeteria and cooking facilities to be used for cooking programs – the most popular choice of youth.

Alignment with Peel's Kids Participate:

A Recreation and After School Strategy (2013-18)

Recommendation 1: *Support efforts to streamline and integrate registration for recreation and after school programs.*

Recommendation 11: *Identify opportunities to better use existing infrastructure to support local and neighbourhood based opportunities during out of school time.*

Similarities and Differences:

PCYI Surveys of Parents and Youth in Peel

In 2012, PCYI undertook a large representative survey of parents (n=1,543) with younger children (0-12) across Peel to inquire about whom specifically was participating in which of the many programs available to support healthy child development (n=26). Bearing in mind, these were the impressions of adults and the children in question are younger, there are some very interesting similarities between what we heard from parents and what we heard from young people in high school.

For example, when we asked parents, and then youth, about the kinds of things that act as barriers, or prevent their participation, there are some commonalities. The timing of many programs is not convenient for parents (40%) and an important issue for youth (48%). When parents were asked specifically about after school programs many of them felt (53%) that the programs that were available would not be of interest to the children, a sentiment echoed by significant numbers of young people. Registration and pre-registration is very problematic for parents (25%) and youth have similarly suggested their preference for more flexible, drop in opportunities to participate. We also found that parents who had significant (informal) social support, including assistance from neighbours, families and friends, were far more likely to enroll their children in developmental programs and activities. As it turns out, youth are reluctant to participate when their friends are not engaged (23%); and about 60% prefer to rely on their friends to find out what might be of interest to them. The takeaway is somewhat the same: isolated parents and youth – those without much social connectedness – are among the least likely to participate in community services and organized activities.

Conclusion: The voices of youth in Peel are vibrant, excited and are telling us that they are ready to get engaged. Many youth do want to spend their free time learning new skills, engaging in healthy programs and activities and preparing for their futures. If we can offer young people in Peel programs that fit their interests and make it easier for them to get to and from these locations, we can give all youth in Peel the opportunity to grow, to thrive and succeed. These changes cannot be made overnight, and many will take time, energy, collaboration and investments; but the future of our youth relies on giving them every opportunity to be successful. This research answers some of the key questions about the kinds of changes that would work.

Now it is time to show youth in Peel that we are not just asking – we are listening.



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