



YOUTH EMPOWERING YOUTH:

HOW SCHOOLS, MEDIA & COMMUNITY IMPACT YOUTH



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Most of us are by now aware that 1 in 5 Canadians will experience a mental health issue, typically during their youth; what is less acknowledged is the fact that young people have traditionally been disengaged and mute on this issue. SOUND OFF is a youth led initiative of the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario (SSO) that developed out of the fundamental need to get youth talking and mobilized on the topic of mental health. SSO has a long history of raising mental health awareness among youth through our education work in high schools, colleges and universities across the province. Our experiences and conversations with students identified a need and opportunity to do more. Through these interactions we learned that young people often feel excluded from the mental health system and want their voices and perspectives heard. In response, SSO formed a Youth Advisory Council in 2011 and together worked on the development of SOUND OFF. In 2012 the initiative secured a two year funding grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Since that time SOUND OFF has hosted seven launch events across Ontario; produced a website; engaged more than 400 youth volunteers; collected over 1,800 surveys from youth; created six public service announcements; and participated in three major youth mental health conferences within Ontario and internationally. Through these activities we have been able to increase the voices and visibility of youth on the topic mental health and through this report hope even more youth across the province will work with us in taking action and enacting positive change.

Writers/Analysts:

Kenny Baldwin
Manish Dama
Lester de Luna
Adam Grearson
Ayesha Jabbar
Roxanne Mathalon
Renee Wilkinson

Designer:

Ludovica Liu

Youth Advocacy Committee:

Mona Abadi
Lester de Luna
Adam Grearson
Ayesha Jabber
Taryn Katz
Roxanne Mathalon
Chelsea Meldrum
Alicia Raimundo

Partners:

Schizophrenia Society of Ontario
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Scadding Court Community Centre
Greg Frankson:
Artist (spoken word), Educator, Activist, Social Innovator
Troy Sexton:
Dancer, Drummer, Beat-Boxer, Teacher, Motivational Speaker
Michael Prosserman, *Unity Break Dancer and Founder of Unity Charity*
Big Brothers, Big Sister Toronto
Volunteer Toronto
Ron Mustafaa
Actor
Support Initiative
Rosedale Heights Public High School
Active Minds, Trent University College/University Mental Health Support Initiative
Lishai Peel:
Artist (spoken word)



This report was fully developed and written by youth members of the SOUND OFF project team, with support from SSO staff and partners.

OUR STORY

Mental illness affects the lives of many, whether you yourself experience it or others important to you do. Approximately 20 percent of all Canadians will experience some form of mental illness in their lifetime¹. The most common types of mental illnesses identified by healthcare professionals include depression and anxiety disorders, but the less prominent disorders such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder are equally important as the more prevalent illnesses². Regardless of the specificity of the diagnosis, mental illnesses do not discriminate against race, gender, or even age.

Seventy percent of adults living with mental illnesses in Canada reported the onset of symptoms before the age of 18³. Furthermore, youth between the ages of 15-24 are more likely to experience mental illness than any other age group⁴. Thus, it is crucial to focus on addressing and providing support to youth mental health issues. Lack of accurate recognition of mental illnesses and supportive resources can lead to youth feeling hopeless. With nowhere to turn, youth may feel that suicide is their only option. Currently, suicide is the second leading cause of death amongst youth from the ages of 10 to 19 years old. For youth experiencing a mental illness, quality of life may be greatly reduced. Without proper supports and resources a mental illness can affect all parts of a young person's life, including personal and social relationships, education and employment. For example, mental illness is the second leading cause

for disability in Canada⁹. In 2003, the economic burden of mental illness in Canada was estimated to be 51 billion per year¹¹. Therefore, without any action in improving the mental health of youth, not only those who are directly impacted by mental illness will be affected but, in terms of economics, so will the rest of Canada

Considering the importance of youth mental health, it is concerning that youth input is rarely ever taken into consideration when making decisions about youth mental health policy and programs. At the same time, youth often experience significant barriers when trying to communicate their experience with mental illness to friends, family, or even the very institutions designed to provide them with support. In response to this major gap, the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario (SSO), with support from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, developed a for-youth-by-youth program, SOUND OFF, to ensure that the voices of teens and young adults are heard on the topic of mental health. In Ontario, SOUND OFF became a platform for young people to express their views and needs in order to improve mental health in their generation.

SOUND OFF has had seven launch events across Ontario; engaged more than 400 youth volunteers; collected over 1,500 surveys from youth; created six public service announcements on youth mental health; and participated in three major youth mental health

conferences within Ontario and internationally. Through these activities we have been able to increase the voices and visibility of youth on the topic of mental health and through this report hope more youth across the province will work with us in taking action and enacting positive change.

Over the course of two years, SOUND OFF rallied youth across the province to *SOUND OFF* on mental health. 1530 youth (between the ages of 15-25) responded to the SOUND OFF questions that asked, “**What is or is not working to support the mental health of youth in: schools, community, and the media.**” Schools, community, and media were selected as the three main categories where youth spend a significant amount of time. This report captures their voice.

The definition of each category is as follows:

School: An institution where education is provided by teachers and/or professors to students. This includes highschool, college, and university students.

Community: A social group of any size whose members reside in a specific location and/or share a common social, cultural, or historical background.

Media: A mass means of communication: television, radio, newspapers, and Internet/social media in all platforms.

ARE SCHOOLS WORKING or not WORKING

To support youth mental health?

Did You Know...

Teachers do not address mental health problems among youth adequately.

Teachers are unable to provide the support required to help students, as well as blaming students for their behaviour relating to mental illness.

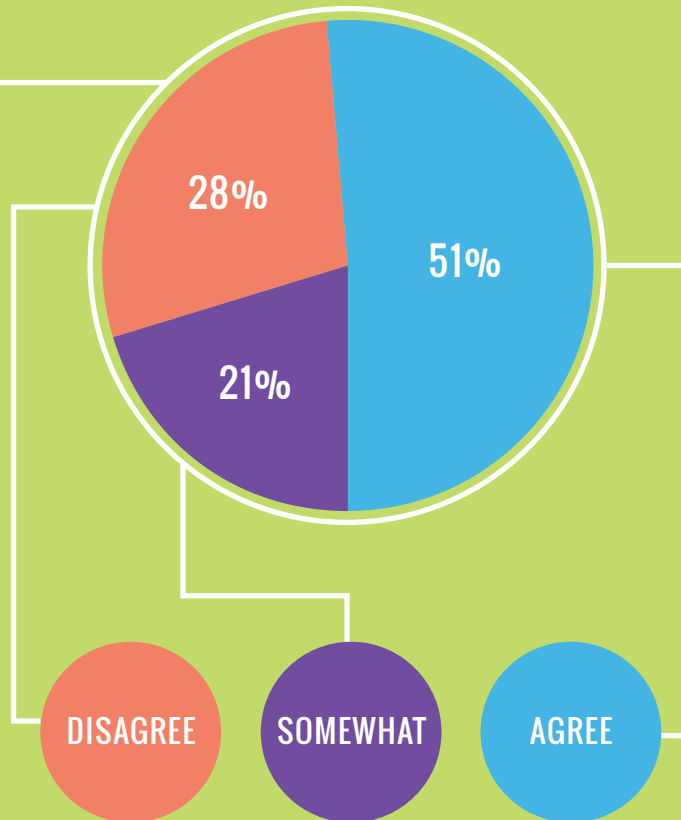
Many of the youth in SOUND OFF expressed that they have no knowledge about mental illnesses and how they develop.

The Issues

What Youth Are Saying

“ Teachers are not equipped with the skills needed to support youth with mental health issues. More education, compassion and support are needed. ”

“ I don't think that mental health is seen as important in schools. ”



How To Fix This

1. Increase communication amongst student body itself and with primary support (counselors, teachers, support workers).
2. Increase mental health education for teachers.
3. Establish a mental-health related-club at every secondary school.
4. Provide presentations more frequently (e.g. youth orientated presentations).

THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

“Teachers are not equipped with the skills needed to support youth with mental health issues. More education, compassion and support are needed.”

“Guidance counsellors are there for you when you need them, while teachers continue to push you so you don’t fall behind.”

“Schools have lots of programs, and guest speakers to raise awareness and support mental health.”

What is Working in Schools

Only 51 percent of youth agreed that schools are supporting mental health. Many stated that schools are raising awareness by implementing presentations given by guest speakers such as Claire Hughes from Bell’s *Let’s Talk Campaign*. A few youth have elaborated that these presentations are beneficial and helpful in understanding mental illnesses.

In addition, youth also felt that guidance counsellors are essential in supporting youth dealing with crises and other stressful situations.

Yet although many youth felt that school is supporting mental health through raising awareness and having staff to help youth, many have disagreed with this view and have claimed that there are multiple issues within the school system when dealing with mental health issues.

Failures of Schools in Addressing Mental Illness

Lack of Support

Some youth who *sounded-off* felt that the majority of teachers do not possess the necessary skills needed to address youth mental health problems.

Furthermore, they noted that teachers do not address mental health problems among youth adequately. Youth have suggested that this is mainly due to a lack of knowledge and skill of how to support students with mental illnesses. As a result, teachers are unable to provide the support required to help students, as well as blaming students for their behaviour related to mental illnesses. If nothing changes, students will continue to view teachers as an ineffective source of help for issues pertaining to mental illness.

In addition to teacher inability to help students with mental illnesses, many youth voiced that there is a need for more guidance counsellors to respond to the volume of those living with mental illnesses.

This is a great concern. If youth find teachers’ support ineffective, this idea of requiring more guidance counsellors trained in handling youth with mental illnesses is that much more important. This is most notable in colleges and universities. In these institutions there is a much larger population of youth who are dealing with much higher levels of stress. Therefore, there is greater potential for youth in these settings to experience various mental illnesses without the appropriate support and treatment.



*“I don’t know
what it is.”*

Youth Need to be Educated

Many of the youth who participated in SOUND OFF expressed that they have no knowledge about mental illnesses and how they develop. For example, one SOUND OFF response was simply “I don’t know what it is.”

Many SOUND OFF respondents voiced the need to provide education on mental illnesses as early as elementary school. As children progress through school, there should be an introduction on what to look for and what resources are available to treat mental illnesses. This is important because it will not only educate youth as they mature, but also cement mental health as an important topic for them. Many of the youth who participated in SOUND OFF felt that no one talks about mental health because it is not considered as important as bullying or teen pregnancy.

*“I’m not sure young people
care about the issue
because we haven’t seen
anyone around us impacted.”*

*“I don’t think that
mental health is seen as
important in schools.”*

*“There’s a need for more
guidance counselors and
supports for teens and young
adults. Post-secondary
schools need to make their
mental health systems more
navigable, especially at large
institutions like U of T.”*

HOW TO FIX THIS

Increase Mental Health Education for Teachers

We can improve mental illness awareness and support in schools by training teachers to address and manage mental health issues. By gaining the necessary skills and knowledge to recognize and support those with mental illnesses, teachers will be able to help students individually and also spread awareness amongst the student body.

As of September 1, 2015, the Ontario College of Teachers has mandated that future teachers undergo more training with a “greater focus on students’ mental health and wellbeing.”⁶ This is a positive step, but this improvement does not solve the fact that thousands of existing teachers in various Ontario school boards may not have any training in dealing with mental health.

“Get someone who is young and modern and exciting to present the presentation in order to get us to listen and pay attention.”

As a result, we recommend that teachers must attend ongoing mental health training as part of their professional development and accreditation. Teachers can attend workshops sponsored by local organizations such as the Hincks-Dellcrest Centre, Talking about Mental Illness, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, etc.

Increase Promotion of Mental Health in Schools

Establish a mental health related club at every secondary school

SOUND OFF respondents noted that school clubs have been effective in raising awareness for mental health issues. Although this is more popular at the post-secondary level, SOUND OFF indicated that this is not the case at the secondary school level. Therefore, we recommend that each secondary school in Ontario should at least have one school club that looks into mental health issues at their school. This will ensure that each school has a local group that can assess mental health issues and then develop programs such as support groups, or possibly recruit educational speakers to address problems. Furthermore, by having these

individual groups in each school, there is an opportunity for them to meet together within their respective school boards. This will enable better communication across schools and greater opportunity to integrate ideas and develop better solutions.

Provide educative and engaging presentations

It is important for schools to host more events with speakers who share their own personal stories to demonstrate that mental illnesses can affect anyone. Bringing in speakers is important, but it is also vital to consider whether the crowd is actively listening and absorbing the information.

Some ways to make presentations more interactive is to incorporate games and hands on activities. Another method that stands out is to use a speaker with whom students can relate.

For instance, one respondent suggested that to improve normalization of mental health, presenters should include more realistic and less dramatic stories. This method of sharing stories will allow youth to relate to and improve their empathy towards those with mental illnesses.

“Doing interactive campaigns that stand up to stigma and raising awareness about mental health and its importance really educate people about mental health issues.”

Improve access to resources at the post-secondary level

Even if there was an increase in number of guidance counsellors and support workers in schools, one glaring issue is how to communicate to youth that there is help for them. This is a great concern at the post-secondary level because of the larger number of youth and how difficult it is to effectively advertise amongst a much larger campus. In SOUND OFF, some youth have pointed out that the current forms of advertising (i.e., brochures at support centres and posters in libraries) are ineffective in grabbing youth attention. Therefore, we recommend that rather than simply relying on posters and brochures, these post-secondary institutions should invest more in online promotion by using social media as their main outlet for advertising resources on their campuses. These can include creating a Facebook group, Twitter accounts, and placing ads on school websites in addition to just placing posters in libraries and cafeterias. Overall, the increased level of exposure will encourage more youth to seek out the help they need.

“Colleges and Universities need to promote and support students with mental illnesses (maybe have a department or program to support students) not just those with learning disabilities.”



IS MEDIA WORKING — or not — WORKING

To support youth
mental health?

Did You Know...

46% of youth
disagreed with the fact
that media is playing any
positive role to support
their mental health.

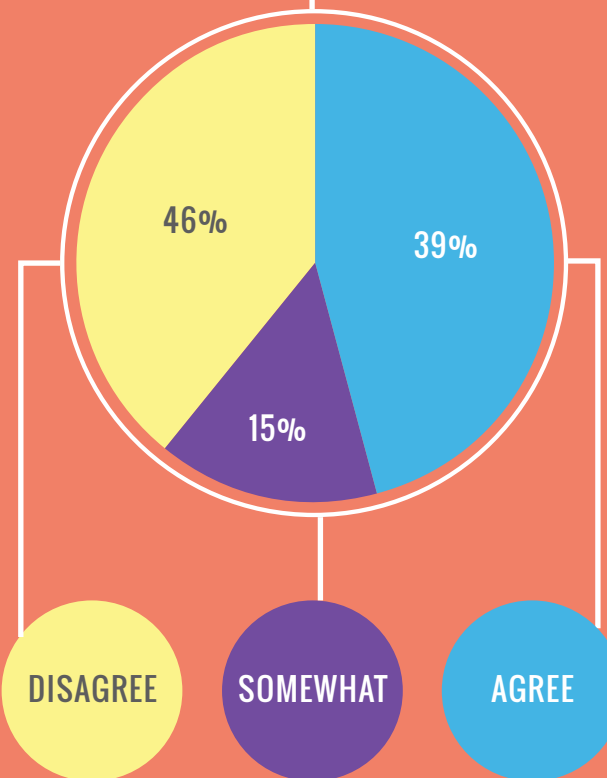
Teens feel pressure about
“What is normal? and
What is not normal?”
and this is causing
self-esteem issues.

Media is a  profit giant that is
ignoring its social
responsibility.

How To Fix This

What Youth Are Saying

- “ There should be more posters,
or advertisements to explain to
others what mental health is
and what causes it. ”
- “ Many celebrities are coming out
to talk about their own mental
health programs which are
helping youth. ”
- “ We’re constantly fed images in the
media that perpetuate impossible
standards and manipulate their
[our] insecurities against them. ”



1. Organizations should promote more social media campaigns which normalize and create awareness around mental health issues.
2. Issues of mental health need to be exposed in social media.
3. Increase media responsibility for the content that is being viewed.

MEDIA'S PRESENCE AMONG YOUTH

Media is the most powerful and effective tool for communication among the youth of this generation. Whether it be through social media, television, posters, movies, magazines, or other sources, media has an undeniable effect on how the youth of today receive and process information.

The media has been influential in creating awareness for mental health issues and providing resources for youth. While various media outlets have made progress in sharing information, it is important to ask whether the current programming is doing more harm than good for mental health issues.

The media business is a for-profit giant that lacks social responsibility concerning most media outlet programming. In the SOUND OFF campaign, many youth have expressed that the media's portrayal of mental illnesses is damaging. Respondents felt that the media portrays mental illnesses as abnormal, which perpetuates the stigma attached to mental illness. This action causes even greater emotional distress among youth with mental health issues.



Fueling the Fire

Mental health issues are constantly portrayed negatively in the media. People who live with mental illnesses are often seen as the “bad guys” or criminals in many television shows, movies and even the news. This stereotyping only further fuels the stigma around mental illnesses. One SOUND OFF respondent noted,

“Much of the mental illness discussed in the media is crime drama, and teen drama. The first leaves the world the assumption that mental illness is scary and dangerous.”

Mental illnesses are consistently misrepresented. The media unrealistically associates an image of violence and abnormality with mental illness. This media image is inaccurate, particularly since mental illnesses can affect anybody. While there are more and more television programs addressing mental health issues, SOUND OFF respondents felt that the media portrays mental illness with greater negativity. This portrayal only contributes to the public ignorance surrounding mental health issues.

Creating an Image of Normal and Abnormal

Youth are faced with overwhelming pressure by the media to look, act, and speak a certain way. With pop culture so easily accessible through social media, television programs, music videos, and magazines, it is hard for youth to ignore these messages. One SOUND OFF respondent stated, “If you are not perfect you are nothing.” This suggests that if youth do not follow the “norm” they will automatically be considered an outcast.



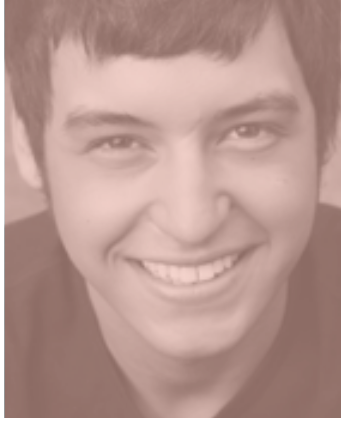
Many respondents feel that media is creating awareness in a negative way by provocatively depicting an image of what is 'perfect'/'normal' and 'imperfect'/'abnormal' for the youth of today in terms of how they should look and feel, the kind of body they should have, as well as what they should purchase/consume. Failure to fit into that image of 'normal' could be perceived as being 'abnormal' or 'imperfect.'

This image of perfection sold to youth is harmful to their self-esteem and can escalate feelings of depression and anxiety. Instead of talking about their problems, these youth are hiding from their peers and loved ones in fear of being viewed as "abnormal."

"We're constantly fed images in the media that perpetuate impossible standards and manipulate their [our] insecurities against them."

"Also all the sexualization of women from the media takes a hard toll on myself because I deal with really bad self-esteem issues."





HOW TO FIX THIS

Organizations should promote more social media campaigns which normalize and create awareness around mental health issues.

Many SOUND OFF respondents expressed a need for a more normalized picture of mental health/mental illnesses. The media needs to create an image of mental illnesses that is relatable to youth in order for them to realize that their feelings are common. Youth do not want simple and generic advertisements. Instead, they prefer realistic and positive advertisements which can display a better reflection of mental health disorders.

Create more supportive online spaces/websites where youth can discuss, and find more information on mental health issues.

Participants also suggest continuing the effective use of social media to create awareness around mental illnesses on a global scale. For example, there is a need for more campaigns like Bell's *Let's Talk* campaign. Some of the SOUND OFF respondents also suggested creating a website similar to Facebook, where people can anonymously seek support or work with professionals with experience or knowledge of the same problems.

Increase media responsibility for the content that is being viewed.

Real portrayals of mental illnesses will have positive results with youth in need and will build a community of support for youth experiencing these illnesses every day. The media must take social responsibility for the content that is released. Commercials/advertisements need to include resources to aid and inform. This is a responsibility of the networks and other media sources that create, contribute and fuel the stigma.

“Issues of mental health need to be exposed in social media. So usual internet visitors can learn more about these issues and not rely on the media presented in news coverage.”

“There should be more posters, or advertisement to explain to others what mental health is and what causes it.”





ARE COMMUNITIES WORKING — or not — WORKING

To support youth mental health?

Did You Know...

Stigma about mental health is infused in our everyday lives; the use of the term “crazy” can be offensive to those with a mental health issue.

Negative language and images are sometimes unintentionally portrayed but nonetheless impact a person’s mental health.

41% of youth felt that the community was not doing enough to respond to the issue of youth in crisis.

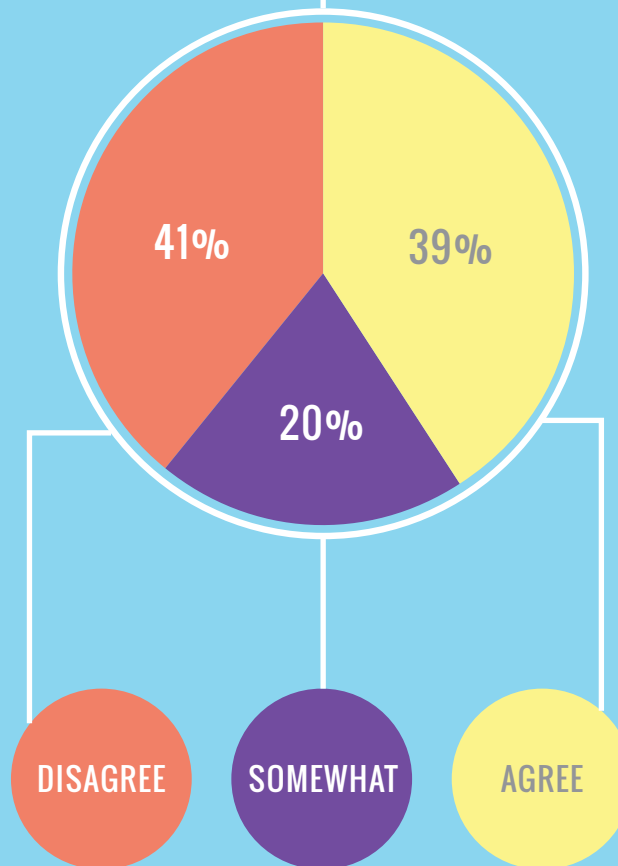
How To Fix This

What Youth Are Saying

“ Most communities would rather just sweep it under the rug. ”

“ There are organizations that help, but not enough. ”

“ I was denied to see my usual counsellor when I turned 19 as I was no longer considered a youth. I don’t really want a new counsellor and have to dig up wounds that took years to mend. ”

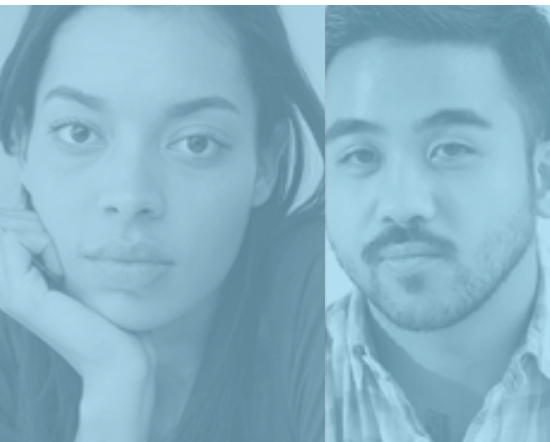


1. Eradicate stigma by increasing community awareness.
2. Create more community support groups.
3. Create more community counseling services so that individuals have someone to speak with.
4. Incorporate faith, religion, and spirituality into youth mental health programs.

COMMUNITY IMPACT ON YOUTH

“Active Minds is a great group on campus; helping people get their stress out in a safe space.”

“There are organizations that help, but not enough.”



We all belong to communities which shape our everyday lives. Community within this report includes, the city or neighbourhood we live, work, or go to school in; the everyday people we interact with; and the community programs that are available within our geographical locations. The community is another contributing factor along with media and schools that shape the perceptions of youth. The types of messages given and received around mental illnesses can greatly impact whether youth seek support or treatment. Without community cooperation, support and resources, unaddressed mental health issues can escalate. The community thus has an enormous responsibility in fostering healthy images, resources and attitudes among their members.

While the communities should be working to foster mental wellbeing among their members, only 39% of youth agreed that communities were working to support youth mental health.

What The 39 Percent Said

Although only a portion of youth felt that the community was working to support youth mental health it is still important to know what initiatives they feel are working in order to use the same

positive strategies for other initiatives to appeal to youth.

Youth felt supported by the community through advocacy initiatives, such as antibullying campaigns and the *Do It for Darren* campaign. In addition, youth mentioned that support lines and culturally sensitive support programs such as healing circles are very helpful with the recovery process.

While these groups seem to have left a positive imprint on how communities are working to support youth mental health, the community is still not doing enough.

Regardless of these already existing programs, 41% of respondents disagreed that communities are working to support youth mental health. They felt that the community was not doing enough to respond to the issue of youth in crisis. Another 20% of respondents stated that “communities are somewhat working” to respond to these issues, emphasizing that improvements must be made.

An Invisible Enemy

Stigma is an invisible enemy that has huge impacts on youth and their mental health. It can

deter youth from seeking help and instill shame rather than encourage youth to seek help. Stigma about mental illnesses is infused in our everyday lives. It exists on TV and in our everyday conversations, such as how many use the term “crazy” very loosely, which can be highly offensive to someone with a mental health issue. Negative language and images are sometimes used unintentionally but they nonetheless impact a person’s mental health. Although community initiatives have attempted to address the issue of stigma, many respondents stated this was an ongoing issue preventing others from getting support or accepting their own mental health issues. One respondent stated that stigma was very much an issue within their community and that speaking about mental health was not easy.

Without attending to these issues early on, these issues can lead to the escalation of difficulties later in life, such as hospitalization, suicide attempts, and issues with the criminal justice system.

“Most communities would rather just sweep it under the rug.”

“Stereotypes still deter people from talking, and reaching out for help.”

Not Fitting In

Another community issue impacting youth is the eligibility criteria for accessing services. Respondents identified eligibility criteria as a major barrier to accessing mental health services. Such eligibility criteria can include but are not limited to, diagnosis, age, gender and geographical location. When attempting to access mental health services, youth found it particularly difficult to find supportive agencies because they did not meet the eligibility criteria. While youth themselves have been reaching out for support and try to access services, they are sometimes unsuccessful in doing so.

In some cases youth have been successful in finding a therapist or counsellor. However, due to eligibility criteria such as age restrictions and length of treatment, youth have had to move out of the program. As a result, counselling or treatment was disrupted. This can discourage youth from reaching out for help again, which can potentially worsen their mental health.



“I have been searching everywhere for workshops. I know that assertiveness training could really help with my social anxiety. There aren’t many workshops available for my age group. Self-esteem and assertiveness workshops are usually only available for teenage girls or battered women.”

“I was denied to see my usual counsellor when I turned 19 as I was no longer considered a youth. I don’t really want a new counsellor and have to dig up wounds that took years to mend.”



HOW TO FIX THIS



Eradicate stigma by increasing community awareness.

As community was viewed as a crucial component to how a person copes, identifies mental health issues, and reaches out for support, it is important to ensure that resources are not only available but also accessible to youth. Strategies which reduce stigma make mental health topics easier to discuss. These include hosting

events within the community that involve people sharing their experiences of mental illnesses. These stories should be told by young individuals, as this would be connecting and appealing for youth by making the stories more interactive, exciting and relatable. Other youth stated that this would be a preferable method of learning compared to going online or reading the information from a pamphlet.

Create more community support groups.

Communities should have more outlets in which youth feel they can express themselves and speak to someone without being judged. Youth mentioned culturally sensitive support groups to be

helpful, thus including support groups such as healing circles would be beneficial in addressing youth mental health.

Create more community counselling services.

Respondents stated more direct conversations about their mental health needs are helpful. This helps empower youth to make more informed decisions about their mental health and well-being.

Increase education for those involved in law enforcement.

This will ensure that individuals experiencing a mental illness are directed to correct services where they can receive support. This education is very important as people with mental health issues should not feel victimized and feel as though there are supports available for them.

Incorporate faith, religion, spirituality, and the arts into youth mental health programs.

Youth voiced the need for more alternative ways of healing other than the overemphasized medical approach. They felt medication was not the only path toward healing and recovery. Other approaches such as finding meaning within one's

life and religion, getting involved in the arts and going to therapy to work out personal problems were some ways respondents stated healing and recovery were helpful. It is also important to increase culturally sensitive programs to reach the diverse youth population.

It is important that positive messages and action is taken in order to help youth understand and manage mental health issues. It is quite clear that youth are impacted by their surroundings, particularly their community. It was also evident that a large portion of these youth felt that the community was not doing enough to support youth mental health. If these core basics are not available to youth in which they are able to receive early intervention, left untreated, mental illnesses can become worse over time. Rather than trying to fix a problem when it becomes complex, it is better to be proactive and take preventative methods that will both benefit youth, families and the community.

“I feel totally alone like I can't talk about my feelings anywhere.”



WHAT WE WANT

SCHOOLS

- Increase mental health education for teachers.
- Establish a mental-health-related club at every secondary school.
- Provide presentations more frequently (e.g. youth orientated presentations).
- Improve access to resources at the post-secondary level.

MEDIAS

- Organizations should promote more social media campaigns which normalize and create awareness around mental health issues.
- Create more supportive online spaces/ websites where youth can discuss and find more information on mental health issues.
- Increase media responsibility for the content that is being viewed.

COMMUNITIES

- Eradicate stigma by increasing community awareness.
- Create more community support groups and community counselling programs.
- Increase education for those involved in law enforcement.
- Incorporate faith, religion, and spirituality into youth mental health programs.

CONCLUSION

SOUND OFF survey data hints that youth do not feel schools, the media, and the community are adequately addressing the issue of mental illness. Only 51% of respondents feel schools are providing sufficient assistance relating to issues of mental health, which is concerning. While youth feel educational presentations and support from guidance councillors are helpful, they have articulated the inadequacy of these mediation strategies in addressing the volume of youth mental health in schools. In addition, respondents feel teachers do not have appropriate skills to recognize and address mental health issues. These findings point to the need of training teachers to educate students about mental illness and the resources they can access to obtain support. Respondents maintain that school clubs which provide support for mental illness at the secondary level would be helpful in connecting students to generate ideas in alleviating the hardships of mental illness. SOUND OFF reports reveal

that youth feel social media resources were inadequate in supporting mental health issues in post secondary institutes. Social media is a far reaching communication tool that needs to be exercised more in post-secondary institutes to reach a great amount of students.

In regards to media, youth respondents feel the image associated with mental illness is abnormal, which maintains the stigma attached to mental illness. This unrealistic image does not represent the commonality of mental illness, which deters youth from confronting issues relating to their mental health. The media needs to portray an authentic image of youth mental illness to send the message that there is no reason to be ashamed of it. In addition, respondents want to see more global media outlets in which youth can seek support with professionals or those going through relatable experiences.

Less than half of youth respondents felt that communities are a sufficient agent in mediating issues pertaining to mental illness. Campaign initiatives and culturally sensitive programs in the community were found to be helpful. However, respondents felt they were not adequately addressing youth mental health. The issue of stigma associated with mental illness in the community deterred youth from confronting their mental health issues. In addition, youth felt community programs are limited in their accessibility. In order to mediate these community issues, programs must be available as well as inclusive in their accessibility. Furthermore there must be more awareness of mental illness in the community by education and support groups. Youth feel within schools, communities, and the media, issues of mental illness are being ignored and stigmatized, and these SOUND OFF findings point to the need of increased awareness and resources to address mental health issues.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Methodology

Print SOUND OFF surveys were distributed and collected at high-school, college and university presentations, as well as youth events. Youth who worked with SSO staff in distributing the survey were provided with a training and orientation session on the initiative, the purpose of the survey, and how to collect it.

Online surveys were promoted through three radio Public Service Announcements that were broadcasted through a variety of campus radio stations in addition to three online videos that were circulated through the SOUND OFF website and through social media platforms. Table 1 enumerates the number of SOUND OFFs received and the methodology adopted to count them.

SOUND OFF Type	Number of SOUND OFFs	Methodology
Received through website	140	Reviewed backend of website and used date and time stamp to source of SOUND OFFs (i.e. uploaded by staff, or web submission).
Counted SOUND OFFs received through outreach activities	1453	Hand counted by volunteers.
Total SOUND OFFs received	1593	

Table 1: Number of SOUND OFFs received

Appendix II: What did the *SOUND OFFs* say?

Although we heard from over 1800 respondents, incomplete submissions were excluded, resulting in a total of 1593 *SOUND OFFs* collected over the span of two years. These *SOUND OFFs* were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively to understand the voice of the youth. Duplicate entries were removed from the data set. *SOUND OFFs* received from young people between the ages of 15 to 25 years were included in the data set. *SOUND OFF* from adults, such as parents, counsellors, or teachers of youth living with a mental illness, were removed from the data set and were not included in the analysis. This was done to ensure that the policy report and its recommendations solely voiced opinions of the young people. After cleaning the data set, the total number of *SOUND OFFs* that were reviewed, analysed, and used to inform this report were 1530.

Appendix III: Data analysis process:

Five young people trained in thematic analysis method took on the task of qualitative analysis. A central analyst coordinated and constantly

reviewed the analysis done by these data analysts. Simultaneously, all 1530 *SOUND OFFs* were then interpreted and clubbed using a pre-defined protocol to capture the number of youth who agreed, disagreed, somewhat agreed, or somewhat disagreed to whether schools, media and community are working to support youth mental health. The protocol used to interpret the *SOUND OFFs* is attached in Appendix II. This clubbing process was done by some youth and SSO staff who were trained and oriented to the protocol and the exercise. Repeated cross checks were done to ensure reliability of the data clubbing process.

217 *SOUND OFFs* were identified as too ambiguous to be interpreted. This data has been presented in Appendix III.

Some of the *SOUND OFFs* voiced strong opinions and recommendations of what should be done to ensure that school, media and community play more supportive roles towards youth mental health. The complete list of youth recommendations can be found in Appendix IV. The recommendations presented in this report are voiced by the youth themselves.



Appendix IV: Sample size of “what is or is not working to support the mental health of youth in schools?”

Comments	
I found that there are some teachers that were supportive and knowledgeable, but didn't have the resources needed.	They are trying harder
Leadership	Yes and no. They say that they are but lets be real.
It's important	Sort of. I see some help going out, but not enough
We have a stop the stigma campaign	Yes, but not enough
Not a lot but MPJ is	I believe schools are starting up more programs, however not enough students are joining.
Can be better	
I don't know	I believe they are sometimes but I don't hear much about it all that much
I didn't give up and I think that I am a better person for it.	
Can be better	Separate classes for youths
I don't know	Yes, but need to help on a more personal level
But much more is needed	Counselors?
I didn't give up and I think that I am a better person for it.	Introduce us to programs
Assemblies?	I think there should be more support though

Tactic 1	
Out of a sample of 21 we have the following	
Agree	✓
Somewhat	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓✓
Disagree	✓
Tactic 2 <u>Recommendations</u> I think there should be more support though Introduce us to programs Separate classes for youth	
Tactic 3 <u>Youth Voice</u> I didn't give up and I think that I am a better person for it.	
Ambiguity: one word answers Assemblies Leadership Counselors	

Appendix V: List of all recommendations in SOUND OFFs

All recommendations under category of 'Schools'

1. Posters on campus: could do more though! Mostly just during mental health month
2. Misdirected attempts with not enough resources and emphasize on peer support
3. Groups like active minds help people with mental health in getting their issues out
4. Through guidance and presentations
5. Bringing awareness and info
6. Posters for help, groups
7. Inviting people in to present more information about mental illness
8. Only if we have presentations
9. Bringing people in to share stories about mental illness
10. Because there are no programs for it but if we got presentations (like this) then yes
11. I don't think there is. There should be more workshops
12. We have a stop the stigma campaign
13. Be hosting events to help people
14. No but I'm willing to help my school
15. Bringing people in to raise awareness
16. Special classes and accessibility
17. Yes we have many support programs however more can be done.
18. More clubs should be made to raise awareness
19. Teachers need to be aware of what mental health can do for people
20. I feel like some are, but there needs to be more support for mental health stress relief group by having guest speakers come in and share their stories and getting information out
21. Kids need more knowledge
22. I think they could do more to support mental health by encouraging more openness, but they're doing a good job of trying

23. They could do more like helping struggling students
24. Through programs like mental health week!
25. Mental health week at school with activities (i.e. yoga at break)
26. Helps us learn
27. More support in guidance and support workers.

All recommendations under category of 'Media'

1. Nothing I have seen shows that media is part of the solution. A company could raise more money for charities that support mental health services.
2. Media portrays an image that we are made to feel perfection. We don't need perfection, we need good examples of healthy lives
3. They should make others more aware students can help

All recommendations under category of 'Community'

1. Needs to be more community mental health programs in Ontario. Currently, many are underfunded and invisible.
2. We need more active therapy (i.e. in person visit to the high school classrooms to discuss and teach about mental illness) and for there to be free group therapy for different age categories. (as advertised in schools, hospitals, and community centers).
3. I don't find that there are enough support groups for teenagers/ youth or if there is then they are very hard to find or get a part of.
4. I was denied to see my usual counsellor when I turned 19 as I was no longer considered a youth. I don't really want a new counsellor and have to dig up wounds that took years to mend.
5. I have been searching everywhere for workshops. I know that assertiveness training could really help with my social anxiety. There aren't many workshops available for my age group. Self-esteem and assertiveness workshops are usually only available for teenage girls or battered woman. I feel like I could really benefit from these workshops or CBT.
6. We need more resources
7. Make events about MI, provide workshops for family and parents to understand more about mental illness

8. Becoming more supportive
9. There are support systems in place but they are not widely accessible
10. Stigma, little access to help, need longer stays in hospitals and more support in community
11. Helping and letting people work
12. Bring people together as one and help each other through things
13. Creating groups for people w/ mental health
14. Making programs to help
15. By creating programs that specifically focuses on mental issues
16. Organizations which help care givers need to be more frequent
17. More support
18. I believe there should be many more facilities/support groups to aid people suffering from mental illness
19. Oneone workers at camps
20. Talking About it more
21. Doing walks to support other people
22. Community involvements marathons
23. More resources should be available, especially for families
24. Having speakers and events about mental health
25. Help us talk to others
26. One on one workers
27. Creating groups for people w/ mental health
28. Making programs to help
29. Therapists in the community.
30. Involve youth in social activities
31. Come around more schools or have community come by
32. Try to work things out with the youth instead of giving them more pills
33. Rock benefit concerts to raise awareness and money
34. Extra curricular activities will help a community bond
35. Not legalizing marijuana is not helpful, because weed helps.

*All recommendations under category
of 'Community' cont.*

36. Drop in mental health clinics. Resources for youth (online, phone, texting), places youth can go to talk to someone about how they are feeling, free.
37. Create 'open' atmosphere
38. Certain communities find it hard to talk about mental health in the ways commonly done by society. You guys need to better understand religion and culture as appropriate sources for communicating mental health empowerment.
39. More organizations and clinics should be opened for teenagers to educate them on mental illness.
40. What is working in the community, I believe that community group events such as concerts, fundraisers...etc. can spread more awareness to those who don't know about mental illness."
41. Diversion programs are a great idea but ineffective in helping mentally ill individuals in the future. My cousin has been personally involved in diversion programs and is proof that they are ineffective. Continual help after the diversion program must be implemented, to help him in a the real world, not just giving him help in a diversion program for a few months up north in the wilderness.
42. We need longerterm support as proposed to just getting help in crisis.
We need more help with integration with the rest of the society learning social skills for those who need it, more respect from our communities
43. Need more compassionate doctors & nurses. Better facilities more beds.
44. More public events to raise awareness, such as "Bell Let's Talk" and mental health summits.
45. More resources needed to be put into the provincial prisons to allow for better support group for the mentally ill.
46. Get them proper treatment. Invest more in mental health programs rather than jails.

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