YOUTH QUALITY OF LIFE REPORT 2026

YOUTH CENTRAL





The Youth Quality of Life Report is a snapshot of what it means to grow up in Calgary today.

Created from the voices of 400 Calgary youth aged 12–17, it explores how young people experience school, community, employment, and belonging.

More than data, this report is a call to listen and to respond.

Report funded through the generosity of

CALGARY FOUNDATION
FOR COMMUNITY, FOREVER

Land Acknowledgement

In the spirit of respect, reciprocity and truth, we honour and acknowledge Moh'kinsstis, and the traditional Treaty 7 territory and practices of the Blackfoot Confederacy: Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, as well as the Îyârhe Nakoda and Tsuut'ina Nations.

We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta District 6.

Finally, we acknowledge all Nations – Indigenous and non – who live, work and play on this land, and who honour and celebrate this territory.

About Youth Central

Youth Central empowers youth to build community through a wide range of leadership and volunteer opportunities. We know that when young people are encouraged to participate in their communities, they not only make an immediate impact but also build resilience for the future for both themselves and their communities.

Our programs prepare the next generation of community leaders for tomorrow's challenges, establishing connections, cultivating empathy, building competence, growing confidence, enhancing employability, and bolstering mental health while supporting the work of over 140 community partners.

WHY YOUTH VOICES MATTER

Calgary's youth are navigating a rapidly changing world, shaped by technology, evolving education systems, uncertainty, and increasing mental health challenges.

Even so, youth remain hopeful, resilient, and engaged in their communities.

This report captures their lived experiences across key areas: youth voice and involvement, youth digital life, youth employment, and happiness and wellbeing.



INSIGHTS ARE DRAWN FROM A 2025 SURVEY OF:

400 CALGARY YOUTH | AGED 12–17

The sample reflects a cross-section of youth across age, gender, and geography in Calgary.

YOUTH WANT TO BELONG—AND BE HEARD

Belonging is a core need for youth, yet many still feel disconnected. While many are present in their communities, not all feel seen, heard, or meaningfully supported. **The gap is not participation, it is whether youth feel their voice matters.**

1 IN 4
feel lonely or isolated



CONFIDENCE SHAPES PARTICIPATION:

only **37%** of females report feeling comfortable sharing ideas, compared to **52%** of males



only
45%
feel they have opportunities to share their voice regularly

READY TO CONTRIBUTE — BUT FACING REAL BARRIERS

Calgary youth are actively participating in their communities, but participation does not always lead to meaningful engagement.

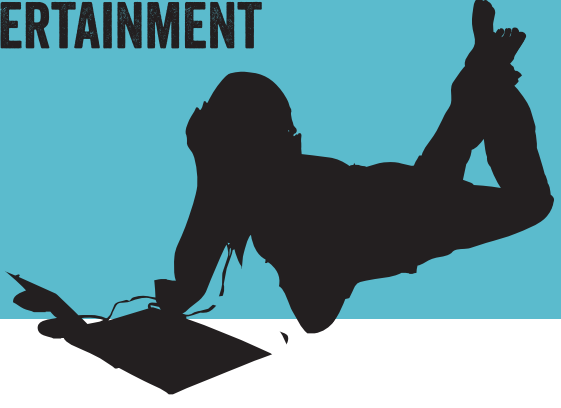
The challenge is not motivation, it is whether pathways are visible, accessible, and designed with youth in mind.



DAILY LIFE IS DIGITAL—AND STRESSFUL

Youth recognize that their connection to digital life may be too much. While online spaces offer opportunities for connection, they also introduce challenges, including time management, exposure to harmful content, and increased stress.

CALGARY YOUTH ARE SPENDING OVER 9 HOURS A DAY ONLINE: 3 HOURS ON SCHOOLWORK AND THE REST ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT



50% of 16-17 year olds feel they are spending too much time online

80% feel safe using the internet, but despite this level of perceived safety

40% have received messages from strangers

31% have seen content that made them feel uncomfortable or upset

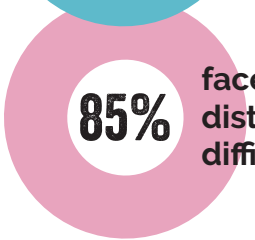
SCHOOL HELPS—BUT ISN'T ALWAYS ENOUGH

Youth are asking for more than academic success, as it is only one part of what youth need to succeed.

MORE THAN ACADEMICS MATTER: YOUTH HIGHLIGHT PRACTICAL LIFE SKILLS, CAREER GUIDANCE, AND JOB READINESS AS UNMET NEEDS



believe they have the resources required to succeed in school



face challenges in school, including distractions, stress or anxiety, and difficulty understanding material

THE FUTURE FEELS HOPEFUL— IF WE ACT NOW

Calgary youth remain hopeful about the future.

However, experiences of stress, bullying, loneliness, and the challenges of finding employment remain common, particularly as youth get older.

These challenges highlight the importance of strong natural support systems and helping youth navigate complexities in their lives.



THIS IS AN INVITATION TO ACT TOGETHER

Calgary's youth are already contributing, but systems must adapt to meet them where they are.

What they need now are clearer pathways, stronger supports, and systems that keep pace with their realities.

Now is the time for our community to respond:

- Invest in programs that expand access to participation and strengthen pathways to employment and wellbeing.
- Expand supports beyond academics to emphasize life skills, career readiness, and bolster mental health.
- Create accessible, inclusive opportunities where youth build confidence and have the opportunity to lead.
- Design systems with youth at the centre and reduce barriers for their participation.

WHEN WE ACT TOGETHER, WE CAN CREATE A COMMUNITY WHERE YOUTH THRIVE

SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

This report draws on survey responses from 400 Calgary youth. Over 80% of participants were recruited through an online panel provider, with the sample designed to reflect Calgary's population by age, gender, and location, based on the most recent Civic Census data.

Participants were randomly selected within demographic groups, and responses were statistically weighted to match current population data. Quality control measures were applied to ensure reliable results.

Age		Gender		Quadrant	
12-13 years old	35%	Male	48%	North West	29%
14-15 years old	33%	Female	49%	North East	17%
16-17 years old	32%	Other	3%	South West	30%
				South East	24%

Contributors

Survey: DDL Analytics, Inc. **Concept and Design:** Fever1995.com



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