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Media Release

For immediate release

January 16, 2022

Halton Youth Impact Survey results

Our Kids Network bulletin highlights young people's experiences of discrimination, homelessness, and food insecurity

Halton Region, Ontario – The [latest bulletin](#) from Our Kids Network (OKN) indicates that 37% of young people participating in the [Halton Youth Impact Survey](#) had experienced discrimination or unfair treatment. Survey findings also show that 16% percent of children and youth had experienced some form of homelessness at some point in their lives, and 28% were facing some degree of food insecurity.

Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of agencies and organizations serving children, youth, and families. In the spring of 2021, 2,599 young people completed its Halton Youth Impact Survey. To report on the findings and to champion positive youth wellbeing, OKN is releasing a series of “data action bulletins.”

Each bulletin focuses on specific areas of young people's lives and includes a series of recommended actions; for example, service providers are encouraged to consider how the findings might highlight gaps and opportunities in their programming.

Elisabeth Wells, OKN's Executive Director, explained that each bulletin serves as a conversation starter. “The insights we've gained from the research about the wellbeing of our children and youth are meant to build awareness, so that more and more people start talking, planning, and acting in ways that improve the lives of Halton's young people.”

[OKN's latest bulletin](#) covers experiences of discrimination, homelessness, and food insecurity.

Discrimination

Almost four in 10 children and youth reported they experienced discrimination in the last year.

The most frequently reported reason for discrimination was race or ethnicity. Indigenous and other racialized children and youth were more likely to report experiencing discrimination than their non-racialized peers.

Young people with a chronic illness or disability were twice as likely to report experiencing discrimination than those not living with a chronic illness or disability.

Homelessness

Almost 2 in 10 children and youth reported they had nowhere to live at some point in their lives.

Homelessness can be defined as unsheltered homelessness, which includes living on the streets or staying in shelters. Living temporarily with family or friends due to not having a place to live is known as hidden homelessness. The Halton Youth Impact Survey assessed lifetime homelessness, which captures whether participants had ever experienced homelessness (sheltered or hidden), even if that is not their current situation. Lifetime homelessness has been connected to poorer socioeconomic and health outcomes.

Survey respondents reporting lifetime homelessness were less likely to report a strong sense of belonging to their community and more likely to report low community support compared to their peers who had not experienced homelessness.

Food insecurity

Almost three in 10 children and youth experienced some degree of food insecurity in the past 12 months.

Children and youth who experienced discrimination were twice as likely to report some degree of food insecurity compared to their peers who did not.

Children reporting food insecurity were about 60% less likely to have regular meals with at least one adult from their family. Young people working full-time or part-time were also less likely to have regular meals with their families.

“Having meals together as a family can improve relationships and give kids a sense of stability and connection,” Wells said. “But families need to have their basic needs met in order to have the time and resources for regular, relaxing meals together that nurture positive development. For all children and youth to thrive, families need access to an adequate standard of living that supports their health and wellbeing.”

Wells pointed out that food prices have risen since the survey was conducted, so the numbers likely underestimate the current experience of some families in Halton.

Data to action

The bulletin asks readers to consider what’s required for strong families and safe children and youth in Halton and suggests that all community members strive for reliable and consistent access to healthy foods; stable, affordable housing for families; inclusive and welcoming spaces, and safe and supportive communities.

“Each person will have a different perspective on the survey results,” Wells said. “Regardless of what you take away from the data, or what you deem to be most important, the goal is the same – to act quickly on negative trends to turn them in a more positive direction. We’re asking everyone to consider what the results mean to them and to find ways to respond. It doesn’t matter where you start, as long as you start.”

For more information about OKN, visit our [Homepage](#).

Download the bulletin infographics [here](#).