

03

Building for the Future:

How Youth in Halton Engage in Caring for their Communities and the Environment

Key findings from the 2021 Halton Youth Impact Survey

In May and June 2021, 2599 young people completed the Halton Youth Impact Survey (HYIS). In November 2021, 44 youth participated in a Youth Data Party to validate the findings and share feedback on how their peers, schools, communities, and organizations serving youth can make a positive impact on young people in Halton. This is the third in a series of Data Action Bulletins to share findings from the Halton Youth Impact Survey and mobilize community partners to take action to support youth in Halton. For more information on the Halton Youth Impact Survey, visit [HYIS Results](#)

We partnered with UNICEF Canada, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Medavie Foundation on this project.

Suggested citation: Our Kids Network (2022). Building for the future: how youth in Halton engage in caring for their communities and the environment. 2021 Halton Youth Impact Survey.

Sociodemographic characteristics of this sample.

		N	%	
GENDER	Female	1112	49%	
	Male	1067	47%	
	Non-binary	30	1%	
	Another gender identity*	51	2%	
AGE	8-12 years	213	10%	
	13-15 years	1010	47%	
	16-18 years	905	43%	
GRADE	Elementary school	247	13%	
	Secondary school	1632	87%	
MUNICIPALITY	Burlington	321	19%	
	Halton Hills	137	8%	
	Milton	448	27%	
	Oakville	770	46%	
IMMIGRATION	Newcomer**	249	11%	
	More than 5 years	271	12%	
	Born in Canada	1657	76%	
CONDITION	Living with chronic illness or disability	321	14%	
VISIBLE MINORITY***	Belongs to a visible minority group	1060	48%	
INDIGENOUS	Identifies as First Nations, Métis, Inuit or other	366	17%	

* Participants could self-identify and enter their own gender identity. The most common response was non-binary. Other responses included: gender fluid (13), questioning/not sure (10), demigirl (3), agender (12), genderqueer (2).

** Living in Canada for five years or less.

*** Respondents could self-identify with one or more race. While the most popular was white (44%), 56% of responses were across diverse racial categories such as: South Asian (20%), East Asian (12%), Middle Eastern (8%), Black (8%), Southeast Asian (5%) and Latino (4%). For the purposes of this report, those responses were categorized as visible minority. Visible minority refers to whether a person is a visible minority or not, as defined by the Employment Equity Act. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”.

Youth environmentalism and volunteerism in Halton and beyond

"I feel like it's important to take care of the environment and to show the community. [...] I want to make volunteering opportunities more 'out there' and accessible so it's easier to get involved."

(HYIS participant)

This bulletin explores youth volunteerism, civic engagement, and environmentalism. Neighbourhoods play a critical role in the healthy development of children and youth. Green spaces like parks, trails, beaches, and community gardens are important public spaces that support physical health, connection and belonging. Civic engagement and volunteerism are ways that youth can exercise their right to have their voices heard and participate in decisions that impact them - this includes the society that they will one day lead and the environment that supports their wellbeing.¹

Volunteerism and civic engagement are opportunities for leadership, learning and growth that allow young people to test and develop coping skills, mastery and self-esteem. These opportunities allow youth to forge connections with other young people and adults, which is vital to their development and overall wellbeing.

Young people care deeply about the natural environment.² Canadian youth have indicated climate change as a key priority with 62% of young people aged 18 to 29 years agreeing that Canada has an obligation to lead on initiatives to address climate change.³ Young people are taking action. Globally, the majority of youth are increasing their use of sustainable modes of transportation, and young Canadians aged 18 to 34 years are the most likely to say they would contribute an extra \$100 per year to help fight climate change.⁴ However, racial and socio-economic privileges can impact one's ability to contribute time or money to environmental causes or make environmentally conscious choices.⁵

The importance of a healthy natural environment can be seen at the global and local level. Neighbourhoods where children and youth can enjoy green areas and recreational facilities set the stage for happy, connected and engaged young people.⁶ In fact, higher amounts of green space near one's home is associated with positive self-reported mental health, and youth who live in walkable neighbourhoods benefit from improved overall health.⁷ In Halton, 6 in 10 children and youth feel satisfied with the overall quality of the natural environment in their communities. However, a young person's ability to participate in sustainability efforts and benefit from green spaces depends in part on their accessibility. The percentage of young people using public transportation is highest in urban centers and declines in rural areas, and lower-income households are less likely to have access to green space and more likely to be exposed to air pollution.⁸

Young people are also spending their time supporting environmental initiatives and community causes. In 2018, young Canadians between 15 and 30 years of age spent a higher proportion of total volunteering hours with environmental organizations and contributed a higher proportion of charitable donations to environmental organizations than those aged 47 and older.⁹ In Halton, 23% of survey participants reported being engaged in protecting the environment. Although youth have shown a keen interest in environmental issues, this has not been the case when it comes to engagement in electoral politics. Young people's participation in electoral politics has consistently been lower than other age groups. However, young people have shown that there are other ways to engage. According to a Statistics Canada report, 67% of young people between the ages of 15 and 30 searched for information on a political issue in the last 12 months and young people were more likely than the rest of the population to sign an internet petition or participate in a demonstration or march.¹⁰ In Halton, 43% of survey participants joined a discussion on social media about a local issue while 21% participated in a public demonstration or protest.

Young people have a right to have their voices heard in issues that affect them. Civic and political engagement is an important part of youth development. It provides young people with opportunities to learn about their rights and responsibilities as citizens¹¹ and facilitates connection with other young people, leading to a stronger sense of community belonging.¹² Civic engagement is also associated with positive self-reported mental health.¹³ In 2018, 77% of young Canadians between 15 and 30 years of age volunteered to improve their community.¹⁴ In 2021, in Halton, 76% of survey participants reported volunteering sometimes, often or always in their community.

There are also some differences when it comes to who participates in what activities. According to Statistics Canada, females are more likely than males to participate in humanitarian, charitable or service organizations. Males are more likely than females to participate in sports or recreation activities, and visible minorities are more likely than non-visible minorities to participate in neighbourhood, civic and community associations.¹⁵ In Halton, visible minority youth are more likely to report having participated in two or more civic activities in the previous 12 months.

What opportunities exist for all young people in Halton to engage in environmental and civic activities and benefit from the natural environment? Are we creating accessible green spaces and engaging youth in our communities?





Findings from the Halton Youth Impact Survey

“Having more volunteer opportunities for youth would allow us to learn new things and connect with each other.”

(HYIS participant)

This bulletin explores differences across municipalities and neighbourhoods, recognizing that strong neighbourhoods help children thrive. Our Kids Network (OKN) partners, researchers, and community professionals have identified 27 different neighbourhoods¹⁶ for collecting, analyzing, and sharing important local research – one of the hallmarks of OKN’s work in Halton. The borders of each neighbourhood reflect Statistics Canada census boundaries, and natural, transportation, municipal and regional boundaries.

When comparing municipalities, it is important to consider the sample distribution (Page 7). The composition of the municipal sample may contribute to the observed differences between municipalities and is relevant to better understanding the data from an equity and diversity lens. The significant differences¹ between percentages highlighted in this bulletin do not account for differences in distribution, such as age, gender, or other important sociodemographic characteristics.

It is essential to explore these key findings with other sources of information and to hear from youth themselves. These findings are intended as a conversation starter. It is one more piece of information to add to what you already know about children, youth, and families in Halton.

- **Six in 10 young people feel satisfied with the overall quality of the natural environment in their communities**
- **Almost three in 10 participated regularly in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment**
- **Almost four in 10 volunteer or serve their communities without pay regularly**
- **In Halton Hills and Milton, a higher percentage of children and youth engaged in two or more civic activities in the past year, compared to their peers in Burlington and Oakville**
- **Out of 361 open comments, 56 (16%) youth gave suggestions on ways to improve their neighbourhoods**

ⁱ For the overall sample, differences between age groups, genders, and other individual characteristics were initially tested using Poisson regressions including gender and age as control. Statistically significant differences between municipalities were identified using pairwise proportion tests, collapsing across age, gender and other sociodemographic variables. The threshold for statistically significant differences was $p < 0.05$ for all statistical tests.

		BURLINGTON (N = 321)		HALTON HILLS (N = 137)		MILTON (N = 448)		OAKVILLE (N = 770)	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
GENDER	Female	155	50%	57	44%	253	58%	409	53%
	Male	157	50%	74	56%	184	42%	322	42%
	Non-binary	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	17	2%
	Another gender identity*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	19	3%
AGE	8 - 12 years	31	10%	40	32%	17	4%	35	5%
	13 - 15 years	147	47%	41	33%	261	59%	390	51%
	16 - 18 years	137	43%	45	36%	166	37%	339	44%
IMMIGRATION	Newcomer**	13	4%	N/A	N/A	40	9%	134	18%
	More than five years	31	10%	N/A	N/A	72	16%	104	14%
	Born in Canada	274	86%	N/A	92%	330	75%	511	68%
CONDITION	Living with a chronic illness or disability	54	17%	32	24%	40	9%	44	6%
VISIBLE MINORITY***	Belongs to a visible minority group	83	27%	21	16%	334	76%	438	58%
INDIGENOUS	Identifies as First Nations, Métis, Inuit or other	42	14%	48	37%	N/A	N/A	26	4%

* Participants could self-identify and enter their own gender identity. The most common response was non-binary. Other responses included: gender fluid (13), questioning/not sure (10), demigirl (3), agender (12), genderqueer (2).

** Living in Canada for five years or less.

*** Respondents could self-identify with one or more race. While the most popular was white (44%), 56% of responses were across diverse racial categories such as: South Asian (20%), East Asian (12%), Middle Eastern (8%), Black (8%), Southeast Asian (5%) and Latino (4%). For the purposes of this report, those responses were categorized as visible minority. Visible minority refers to whether a person is a visible minority or not, as defined by the Employment Equity Act. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour".



Youth Environmentalism and volunteerism in Halton: the numbers

“I wish that my community [had] more groups and associations where we can connect, volunteer and help the environment. I’ve never heard of such group[s] in my community.”

(HYIS participant)

Youth in Halton answered questions about their satisfaction with the quality of the natural environment in their community, environmentalism, volunteerism and caring for their community, and civic engagement.

Satisfaction with the natural environment measures agreement with four items: “The quality of the natural environment in my neighbourhood is very high,” “There are plenty of opportunities to enjoy nature in my neighbourhood,” “The air quality in our community is very good,” and “The water quality in our community is very good.” Overall satisfaction was defined by a mean of four or five (equivalent to “agree” and “strongly agree”).





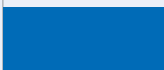







Environmentalism captures agreement with two indicators: “I feel I have a personal responsibility to protect the natural environment” and “I regularly participate in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment” (e.g., protests, fundraising, community clean-ups).

Civic Engagement measures participation in civic advocacy activities in the past 12 months (see table below for a list of activities). Children and youth engaging in at least one activity were classified as having some civic engagement, and those engaged in two or more activities were considered as having high civic engagement.

Volunteerism measures the percentage of youth regularly engaged in volunteering or helping without pay in their community. The four-point scale ranged from “Rarely” to “Always”, and answers “Often” and “Always” were classified as regular volunteering. It is important to note that volunteering rates may be partly influenced by “mandatory” volunteering, which includes required unpaid activity by a school, employer, court, or other organization.

Community Caring measures the percentage of youth reporting that they place a high value on helping other people. Community Caring included two items: “I help to make my community a better place”, and “I serve others in my community”. The 4-point items ranged from “Rarely” to “Always”. Scores equivalent to averaging “Often” between the two items were classified as high community caring. These items were developed by the OKN Research Committee and were included on the Halton Youth Survey (2009, 2012).¹⁷

YOUTH ENVIRONMENTALISM AND VOLUNTEERISM IN HALTON, 2021

ENVIRONMENTALISM	Feels personally responsible for helping protect the natural environment		67%
	Regularly participates in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment		27%
SATISFACTION WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	Satisfied with the quality of the natural environment in their community		64%
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	Some civic engagement (participated in at least one civic activity in the past 12 months)		61%
	High civic engagement (participated in two or more civic activities in the past 12 months)		36%
	Joined a discussion on social media about a local issue		43%
	Participated in a local event in support of a charitable organization		34%
	Participated in a public demonstration or protest		21%
	Wrote a letter/e-mail/spoke with a municipal official (e.g., the Mayor)		17%
	Wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper about a local issue		11%
HELPING THE COMMUNITY	Volunteerism		36%
	Community Caring		22%

Source: Our Kids Network (2021). Halton Youth Impact Survey. In partnership with UNICEF CANADA and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing





“Having more green areas is especially important because there is so much construction and this causes bad air quality.”

(HYIS participant)

Indigenous youth were more likely to participate regularly in volunteering and initiatives to protect the natural environment (independent of age and gender). Indigenous youth were also more likely to report high civic engagement in the last year compared to their non-Indigenous peers (independent of gender and age).

Newcomer youth were also more likely to report regularly volunteering or engaging in activities to protect the natural environment (independent of age and gender), compared to participants born in Canada. However, those born in Canada were more likely to report high civic engagement than those who had immigrated to Canada. Visible minority youth were more likely to report high civic engagement compared to their white peers (independent of gender and age).

The remainder of this bulletin provides findings by municipality and neighbourhood. Significant differences for each municipality are highlighted.ⁱⁱ It is important to note that youth in Halton may face barriers in accessing green areas and public transportation, which can impact engagement in environmental initiatives, supporting communities and overall enjoyment of natural surroundings.

BARRIERS FOR PARTICIPATING IN RECREATION ACTIVITIES

	n (%)	Does not have access to public transportation	Does not have a park nearby
BURLINGTON	321 (19%)	10%	7%
HALTON HILLS	137 (8%)	25%	13%
MILTON	448 (27%)	12%	3%
OAKVILLE	770 (46%)	7%	5%

Source: Our Kids Network (2021). Halton Youth Impact Survey. In partnership with UNICEF CANADA and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing

ii Differences between neighbourhoods were not tested for statistical significance.

Burlington



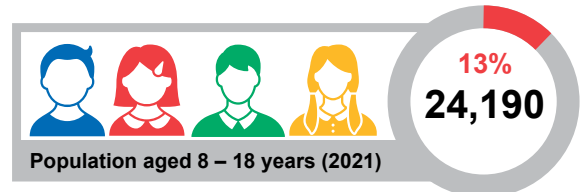
“Burlington is best described as a modern city with all of the charm and feel of a small town. Our community is woven tight through our penchant for highlighting historical elements (like our world-renowned Teen Tour Band) in addition to ushering in new traditions like the city’s annual Sound of Music Festival and Ribfest. Nature is deeply integrated into Burlington through the city’s waterfront access to Lake Ontario and luscious Royal Botanical Gardens”.

(Sasha, youth from Burlington)















































Comparing sample characteristics in the Halton Youth Impact Survey, Burlington has the second largest percentage of children and youth identifying as Indigenous (14%) and the second largest percentage of young people living with a chronic illness or disability (17%).

The overall percentage of youth reporting high civic engagement in Burlington (30%) was significantly smaller than that of Halton Hills (40%) and Milton (38%). Engagement in actions to protect the natural environment ranged from 26% to 41%. Across all Burlington neighbourhoods, young people in Central West Burlington reported the highest percentage of environmental engagement volunteerism, and high levels of civic engagement.

Total population (2021)



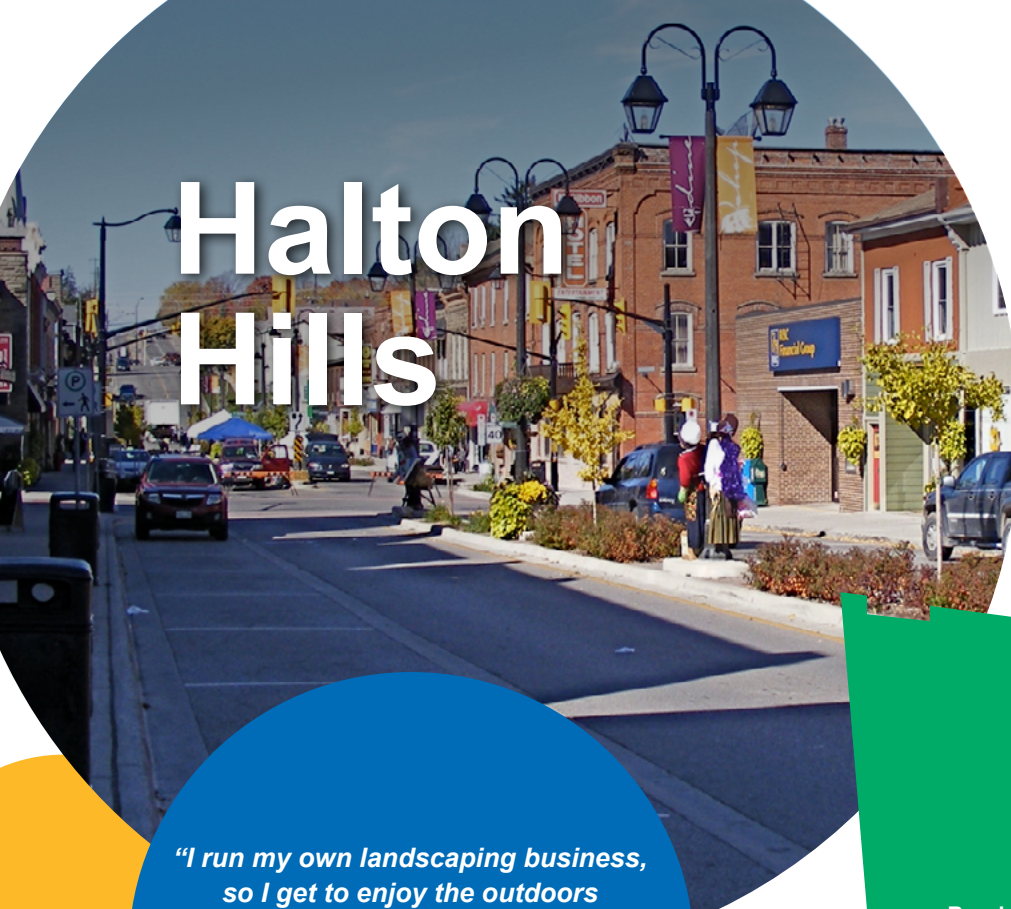
Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

		ENVIRONMENTALISM		SATISFACTION WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT		HELPING THE COMMUNITY	
n (%)		Feels personally responsible for helping protect the natural environment	Regularly participates in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment	Satisfied with the quality of the natural environment in their community	Some civic engagement (participated in at least one civic activity in the past 12 months)	High civic engagement (participated in two or more civic activities in the past 12 months)	Volunteerism	Community Caring
BURLINGTON	321 (19%)	 71%	 26%	 67%	 59%	 30%	 28%	 22%
Aldershot	43 (13%)	 72%	Not Available	 74%	 58%	 33%	 28%	Not Available
Central Burlington	27 (8%)	 63%	Not Available	 78%	 56%	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
Central East Burlington	47 (15%)	 75%	Not Available	 66%	 57%	 26%	 21%	Not Available
Central West Burlington	29 (9%)	 76%	 41%	 79%	 66%	 45%	 45%	 38%
North Burlington	27 (8%)	 52%	Not Available	 74%	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
South Central Burlington	55 (17%)	 80%	 35%	 59%	 64%	 44%	 36%	 39%
South East Burlington	66 (21%)	 71%	 26%	 59%	 67%	 27%	 24%	Not Available
The Orchard	27 (8%)	 67%	Not Available	 63%	 52%	Not Available	 37%	Not Available

Note: some numbers may have been suppressed to ensure confidentiality, and will display as "Not Available".

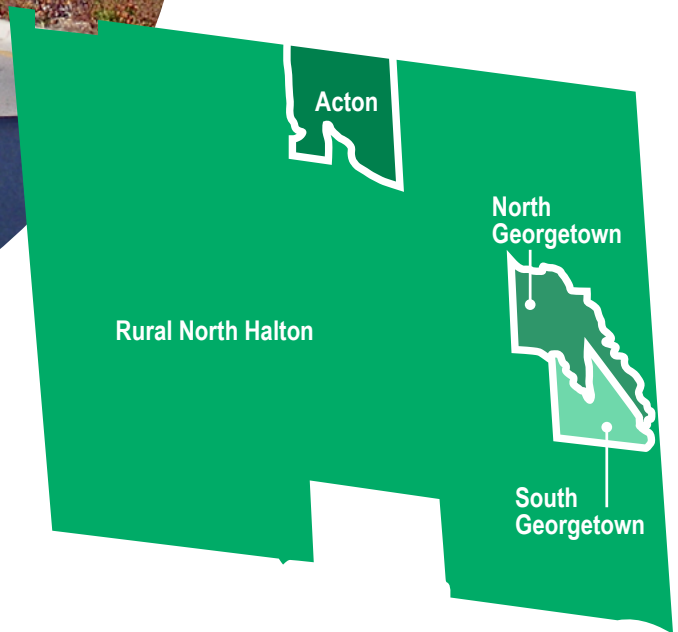
Source: Our Kids Network (2021). Halton Youth Impact Survey. In partnership with UNICEF CANADA and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing

Halton Hills



“I run my own landscaping business, so I get to enjoy the outdoors in Acton every day. I like that this is a small town, and you practically know everyone”

(Noah, youth from Halton Hills)

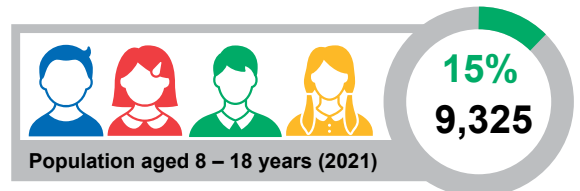


Halton Hills has the highest percentage of respondents in the 8 to 12 age range (32%) and of respondents born in Canada (92%). Also, Halton Hills has the largest ratio among all municipalities for participants identifying as Indigenous (37%).

In Halton Hills, the proportion of youth reporting high levels of satisfaction with their natural environment was significantly smaller than in Burlington, Milton, or Oakville. Even though the percentage of youth engaging in events to protect the natural environment was similar to that of other municipalities, in Halton Hills, the percentage of youth who reported feeling a personal responsibility towards protecting the environment was significantly smaller than the other three Halton municipalities. In contrast, the percentage of youth reporting high levels of civic engagement was significantly greater for Halton Hills compared to Oakville and Burlington and on par with that of Milton.

Acton had the highest percentage of young people regularly participating in events to protect the natural environment, volunteerism and high civic engagement. However, Acton had the smallest percentage of youth who reported feeling highly satisfied with their natural environment.

Total population (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

		ENVIRONMENTALISM		SATISFACTION WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT		HELPING THE COMMUNITY	
n (%)		Feels personally responsible for helping protect the natural environment	Regularly participates in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment	Satisfied with the quality of the natural environment in their community	Some civic engagement (participated in at least one civic activity in the past 12 months)	High civic engagement (participated in two or more civic activities in the past 12 months)	Volunteerism	Community Caring
HALTON HILLS	137 (8%)	58%	27%	55%	61%	40%	37%	24%
Acton	62 (45%)	45%	28%	33%	61%	44%	41%	28%
North Georgetown	30 (22%)	63%	Not Available	67%	63%	33%	40%	Not Available
Rural North Halton	18 (13%)	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
South Georgetown	27 (20%)	73%	Not Available	70%	59%	37%	Not Available	Not Available

Note: some numbers may have been suppressed to ensure confidentiality, and will display as "Not Available".

Source: Our Kids Network (2021). Halton Youth Impact Survey. In partnership with UNICEF CANADA and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing

Milton



"I love the outdoor events my community has in the spring and summer. I love our farmers markets and the amazing strawberry festival hosted at the Milton fairgrounds in July. If you're not from Milton, I urge you to check out some of the wonderful creeks and trails we have spread out throughout the town!"

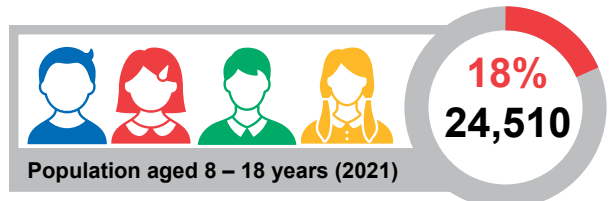
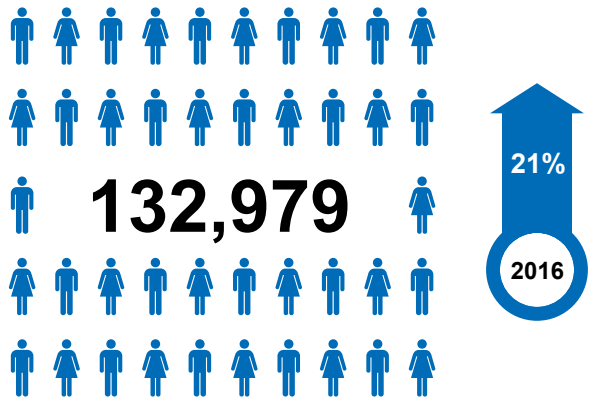
(Trisha, youth from Milton)

Milton is the second fastest growing community in Ontario.¹⁸ It has the largest percentage of visible minority participants (75%), but the smallest percentage of respondents identifying as Indigenous and only 4% of respondents in the 8 to 12 age range.




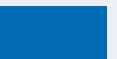
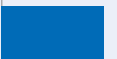



































In Milton, the percentage of youth that reported being highly satisfied with their natural environment is significantly lower than that of Oakville, on par with Burlington and greater than Halton Hills. The percentage of young people with high levels of civic engagement is similar to that of Halton Hills, but significantly greater than that of Oakville and Burlington.

Escarpment has the highest percentage of youth engaging in events to protect the natural environment. Volunteerism ranges from 28% to 45%, with Lower East Milton at the top of the range. Lower East Milton also has the highest percentage of youth reporting high civic engagement, at 47%.

Total population (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

	n (%)	ENVIRONMENTALISM		SATISFACTION WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT		HELPING THE COMMUNITY	
		Feels personally responsible for helping protect the natural environment	Regularly participates in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment	Satisfied with the quality of the natural environment in their community	Some civic engagement (participated in at least one civic activity in the past 12 months)	High civic engagement (participated in two or more civic activities in the past 12 months)	Volunteerism	Community Caring
MILTON	448 (27%)	 71%	 23%	 67%	 61%	 38%	 34%	 21%
East Milton	27 (6%)	 59%	Not Available	 78%	 59%	 41%	 37%	Not Available
Escarpment	112 (25%)	 71%	 25%	 70%	 63%	 37%	 29%	 18%
Lower East Milton	76 (17%)	 86%	 21%	 70%	 66%	 47%	 45%	 25%
South Central Milton	110 (25%)	 72%	 22%	 57%	 64%	 41%	 28%	 21%
Upper East Milton	102 (23%)	 64%	 20%	 70%	 47%	 28%	 37%	 22%
West Milton	21 (5%)	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available

Note: some numbers may have been suppressed to ensure confidentiality, and will display as "Not Available".

Source: Our Kids Network (2021). Halton Youth Impact Survey. In partnership with UNICEF CANADA and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing

Oakville



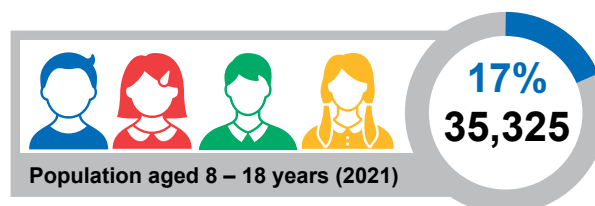
“Safe, peaceful, beautiful landscapes; there is nothing not to like about Oakville! I love the squirrels and the birds, the parks, and the stores - but most importantly the kind, inclusive people who make this town all the better. Feel free to check out the green environment that is present in our community, even if you’re not from Oakville”!

(Ellis, youth from Oakville)

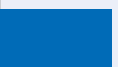






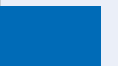

























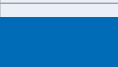




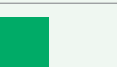


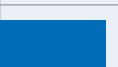

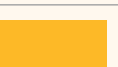




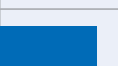



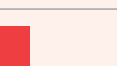

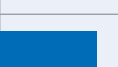

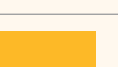




Oakville has the smallest percentage of survey participants born in Canada (68%). 4% of respondents identified as Indigenous and only 5% were in the 8 to 12 age group. Oakville has the second largest percentage of visible minority participants.

The percentage of children and youth in Oakville reporting high satisfaction with their natural environment is significantly larger than that of the three other municipalities. The percentage of young people engaging in initiatives to protect the environment ranged from 18% to 28% across Oakville neighbourhoods. North Central Oakville had the highest percentage of youth reporting high levels of environmental engagement (28%) and volunteerism (64%). North Central Oakville was also the neighbourhood with the largest percentage of youth reporting high civic engagement, at 44%.

Total population (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

	n (%)	ENVIRONMENTALISM		SATISFACTION WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	CIVIC ENGAGEMENT		HELPING THE COMMUNITY	
		Feels personally responsible for helping protect the natural environment	Regularly participates in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment	Satisfied with the quality of the natural environment in their community	Some civic engagement (participated in at least one civic activity in the past 12 months)	High civic engagement (participated in two or more civic activities in the past 12 months)	Volunteerism	Community Caring
OAKVILLE	770 (46%)	 74%	 23%	 81%	 55%	 28%	 33%	 19%
Glen Abbey	93 (12%)	 73%	 23%	 84%	 53%	 23%	 33%	 23%
North Bronte Oakville	118 (15%)	 75%	 20%	 81%	 59%	 31%	 33%	 18%
North Central Oakville	25 (3%)	 84%	Not Available	 84%	 72%	 44%	 64%	Not Available
North East Oakville	83 (11%)	 78%	 22%	 85%	 60%	 39%	 36%	 23%
River Oaks	142 (18%)	 75%	 25%	 87%	 48%	 22%	 32%	 20%
South Central Oakville	25 (3%)	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available	 52%	Not Available	Not Available	Not Available
South East Oakville	81 (11%)	 70%	 28%	 79%	 57%	 33%	 40%	 21%
South West Oakville	96 (13%)	 69%	 23%	 73%	 51%	 17%	 19%	Not Available
Upper Glen Abbey	107 (14%)	 69%	 18%	 77%	 57%	 28%	 30%	 14%

Note: some numbers may have been suppressed to ensure confidentiality, and will display as "Not Available".

Source: Our Kids Network (2021). Halton Youth Impact Survey. In partnership with UNICEF CANADA and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing



The story behind the numbers: comments on the environment and youth engagement

With COVID-19 restrictions on social gatherings, youth often mentioned wanting more opportunities to connect with their community, friends and neighbours.¹⁹ Activities to improve the community and environmental action were common suggestions in the open comments section of the survey. Out of 361 open comments, 56 (16%) offered suggestions to improve their neighbourhoods. The suggestions ranged from improving or adding recreation and culture facilities or parks, to offering transportation for youth who want to participate in community events. Concerns about safety in their neighbourhoods or inclusivity were also raised. Youth have much to say and want to engage with their communities. Among those 56 comments, 23 (41%) wanted to see more opportunities to get engaged and volunteer in their communities.

The environment was also a concern for those suggesting improvements to their communities. Out of 56 comments, 28 (50%) wanted more action towards protecting the environment and offering opportunities for youth to be outdoors and enjoy nature. Environmental events, recycling, community gardens, clean-ups, and initiatives to improve air quality were cited. Youth also mentioned a desire for more green areas or improvement of existing green areas to bolster conservation efforts (e.g., adding plants that support endangered species). Two youth were concerned about the increased construction in their neighbourhoods and one youth wanted natural areas to be protected. Moreover, approximately one-third of comments on volunteering or engaging in community activities cited environmental initiatives. This seems to be an area where youth are eager to support their neighbourhoods.



What next? Data to action

The findings from the HYIS provide our community with new, comprehensive data, informed by a youth engagement strategy, and validated by youth from across Halton. Now, it is time for organizations serving youth in Halton to move the data into action.

How can we create opportunities for all youth to engage in environmental, civic, and other activities while also benefiting from the natural environment?

STEP 1

Consider the conditions we want to see for environmental and civic engagement in Halton.

The findings from the HYIS suggest three key conditions we should strive for:

- Accessible green spaces where all youth can benefit from the natural environment
- Young people regularly engaged in environmental, civic and other community activities
- Young people serving as leaders in their communities in the causes they care about

STEP 2

Explore and share the findings. More data can be found at [OKN Data Portal](#).

Have conversations about what the results mean, and how we can work together in Halton to respond to these findings.

STEP 3

This Data Action Bulletin posits a series of questions, or Data Actions, to guide discussion and, ultimately, action at your organization. We encourage you to work through and discuss each question as a group. It is our vision that the conversations catalyzed by these questions will be unique to your organization and create pathways for mobilizing the data within your organization and our communities.

How we achieve these outcomes will be determined by the actions we take, individually in our respective work, and collaboratively as a community. The Data Actions below are designed to guide discussion at your organization.

Accessible green spaces where all youth can benefit from the natural environment

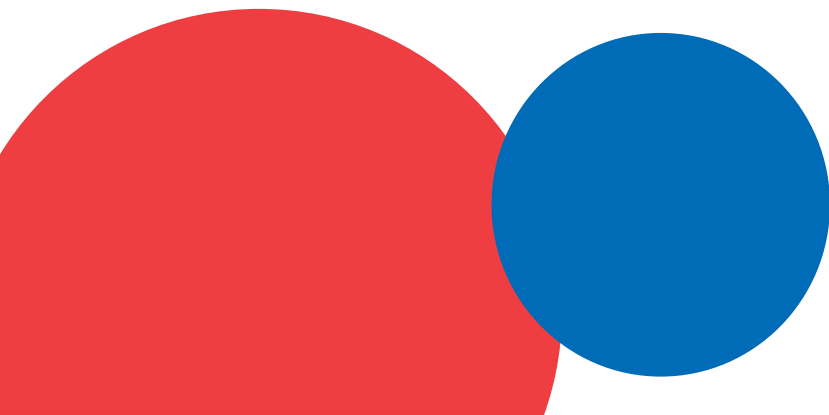
- In what ways can your organization improve access and provide opportunities for youth to access green community spaces, such as parks, walking paths, community gardens or outdoor recreation facilities?
- How can your organization address public transportation challenges when working with youth?
- In what ways can your organization prioritize outdoor activities in youth programs, such as school trips, experiential learning, sports, and arts and culture?
- In what ways can your organization provide opportunities for youth to participate in the natural environment that are reflective of the diversity of youth in your community?

Young people regularly engaged in environmental, civic and other community activities²⁰

- In what ways can you authentically connect youth with volunteer opportunities at your organization or with partners in the community?
- How can organizations in Halton promote environmental initiatives that connect youth with the outdoors, such as recycling, neighbourhood clean-ups or habitat rehabilitation?
- What are the ways in which young people can be authentically engaged in activities that mobilize their participation in democratic processes?

Young people serving as leaders in their communities in the causes they care about

- What are the ways in which you can involve youth in planning and decision-making at your organization so that their voices are part of the programs and services in the community?
- In what ways does your organization create opportunities for youth to take action and lead initiatives, activities and events?
- How are the efforts of youth recognized at your organization and in what ways are their contributions validated?





Advancing beyond this data

As you take the steps to move the data into action, consider reflecting on what we still need to understand.

- Is something missing from these key findings?
- Has your organization identified an area that should be explored further?
- How can we work together to address these knowledge gaps?

Limitations

- Open invitation sampling strategy (non-probabilistic)
 - Sample is not necessarily representative of all children and youth living in Halton.
 - It is not possible to determine a response rate.
 - However, considering the geographic coverage and the size of the final sample, it's fair to assume that we have a reasonably good cross-section of children and youth living in Halton.
- A higher degree of diversity within this sample calls for caution when interpreting overall ratios. For more details on the composition of the sample see the sociodemographic table
- The data are meant to provide a snapshot of youth wellbeing during COVID, and caution should be used when comparing across time.
- While each indicator is important, using multiple indicators as evidence of strengths and needs provides a more comprehensive representation
- This is a self-report survey and several types of response bias have been identified related to self-report surveys. Use caution when interpreting the findings

Endnotes

- 1 UNICEF Canada (2019). Where Does Canada Stand? The Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being, 2019 Baseline Report. Retrieved from: https://oneyouth.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/2019-08/2019_Baseline_Report_Canadian_Index_of_Child_and_Youth_Well-being.pdf
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- 4 Statistics Canada (2022). Portrait of Youth in Canada: Data Report – Chapter 5: Youth and the Environment. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/42-28-0001/2021001/article/00005-eng.htm>
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- 17 Our Kids Network (2013). Halton Youth Survey: Community Profile 2012-13. Retrieved from https://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Page/Files/130_Res_HYS-HYPS_hys_community_profile_2012.pdf
- 18 Statistics Canada (2022). Census in Brief: Canada's fastest growing and decreasing municipalities from 2016 to 2021. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/98-200-x/2021001/98-200-x2021001-eng.cfm>
- 19 Our Kids Network (2022). Relationships are the Roots of Positive Development: Belonging and Connectedness for Halton Youth. Retrieved from <https://www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Common/ShortCodes/Relationships-FINAL.pdf>
- 20 For more resources on Authentic Youth Engagement visit: <https://www.haltonyouth.com/>

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