

# SURVEY PROVIDES A PLATFORM FOR YOUTH VOICES

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Young people often feel no one is listening, but in the case of a unique survey underway, youthful Halton voices are the only ones that matter.

According to the 2016 census, there are some 76,000 young people between the ages of nine and 18 living in the four municipalities that comprise this region and Halton Youth Impact Survey organizers would like to hear from as many of them as possible: From the northern parameters of Acton to the western edges of Burlington, the eastern borders of Oakville and everywhere in between.

Halton is one of four locations in the country invited to participate first in an initiative, supported by

UNICEF Canada, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, Medivae Foundation and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, to eventually "develop a national index of child and youth well-being."

"This is really unique in terms of it's a survey for the community by the community," said Elisabeth Wells, Research and Knowledge Mobilization Manager for Our Kids Network (OKN), the Halton organization responsible for rolling out the online survey, which runs until June 14.

"This is really focused on local data and information which is going to be used by all of our different partners and agencies that work together to support children and youth."

It's particularly exciting for OKN and its partners to have the opportunity to collect Halton-specific data,

as well as to help build a UNICEF Canada survey that will ultimately be used across Canada.

"I believe Halton was chosen because we have a really solid reputation for doing this kind of work, so we really bring together and support all different organizations, agencies and professionals who work with children youth and families."

There was no particular impetus that prompted the survey's release at this time, however, the pandemic provided a prime backdrop, with the perceived impact and anecdotal evidence of how it is impacting youth and children, especially their mental health, said Wells.

"Across all Halton neighbourhoods, everyone is concerned about our young people, especially in these extraordinary

times," said Wells. "When we hear from them directly, and learn more about their activities, thoughts and feelings, we'll be better equipped as a community to support their needs."

The key aspect for OKN is making sure that there is diversity in the voices of the young people participating, said Wells.

Participating in the survey is a simple way to make a huge impact on the community, said Amber Siddiqui, 16, one of many Youth Impact Survey Ambassadors engaged by OKN to promote the survey.

"The great thing about this survey is that it provides a platform for youth to use their voice, with a promise that community partners in Halton will take the results and youth feedback into consideration," said Amber.

The survey gives young

people the opportunity to share their own personal experiences and recommendations on how community partners can incorporate youth development and well-being into their planning, said Amber.

Youth ambassador Natalie Kondrat said her friends thought it was cool to do a survey.

"This is a chance to have adults hear from us," said Natalie, 11. "It's kinda like doing a fun quiz. The chance to win prizes is great."

"It's important for youth to participate because when you fill out that survey it's a check in, and a

way to wake you up to your well-being and how you are doing right now.

"Also, organizations in Halton can hear what we are saying and are big enough to make change and programs to help our well-being. Kids my age nine to 13 years old, do not have a lot of opportunities to share their experiences," said Natalie.

The youth of Halton are its future. This is their community, and they should have a say in the things that are happening, said Wells.

To fill out the survey, go to [ourkidsnetwork.ca/HY-survey](http://ourkidsnetwork.ca/HY-survey).

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