



NEWS RELEASE

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Ground-breaking youth survey gives Vancouver the grades

The results of *Youth Vital Signs* – a ground-breaking survey designed by youth and capturing the perceptions and experiences of 1,700 youth in Vancouver age 15 to 24 – were released today.

The survey explored 12 issues in detail. Highlights include:

- Housing and poverty are major concerns. Young people gave Youth Housing and Homelessness, and Poverty: the Gap Between Rich and Poor the lowest marks. Both areas scored a D when youth rated Vancouver on these issues.
- Safety and Youth Voice also received a low grade. These areas were given a C grade by the young people who participated in the survey.
- Overall, youth were positive about their experiences in Vancouver, giving mostly a grade of B to the other eight areas of city life that were explored: Arts Scene, Going Green, Transportation, Youth Spaces, Health and Well-being, Education and Learning, Employment and Training, and lastly Culture, Identity and Belonging.

The *Youth Vital Signs* report card is the product of a year-long, youth-driven research and public opinion project that gives a voice to Vancouver youth. The report aims to increase the influence of youth in public policy and community investment decisions that affect their lives by encouraging dialogue, debate and action.

The project was led by the *Youth Vital Signs* Leadership Council, a diverse group of 19 youth from different backgrounds and neighbourhoods in Vancouver. They presented the findings today to Vancouver City Council.

The Leadership Council went to great lengths to ensure that all types of youth had an opportunity to provide their opinion. The group not only hosted the survey online, but also made considerable effort to get out into the community and offer the survey in paper form. The team went to places where youth congregate, and even encouraged many street youth to complete the questionnaire.

Besides a survey exploring youth perceptions in key areas of community living, the study also conducted a separate mobile telephone survey on public engagement. More than 3,000 youth responded to that survey on the first day. The results from that survey show youth have a positive outlook on the importance of voting and their ability to make a difference.

In addition, *Youth Vital Signs* also offers some further insights into issues of concern to youth and, in some cases, what might be done to address these:

- Youth are struggling with Vancouver's tight housing market that gives them few options. From 2006 to 2008 the cost of a one-bedroom apartment surged 11 per cent to \$936 a month, which would cost the average youth more than 80 per cent of their income.
- 38 per cent of youth surveyed said the top priority for the next year was raising the minimum wage, which has been \$8 an hour since 2001.
- In terms of Safety, youth believed improving their relationship with police was a priority. Their second priority was transit safety. In addition, one in four youth have been victims of cyber-bullying, while only 41 per cent of youth feel safe at school.
- Youth Voice is about the power that comes from being heard and included in decisions that affect youth's lives, which is what this project is all about. The top priority here, named by half the youth surveyed, was to lower the voting age to 16.
- While Going Green scored a B grade, youth would like to see the city continue on a sustainable path.

The full *Youth Vital Signs* report can be downloaded, along with information on the survey, methodology and additional data, from: www.youthvitalsigns.ca

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