

2021

YouVoice Ottawa Report

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SOCIAL PLANNING
COUNCIL
of Ottawa



Le CONSEIL de
PLANIFICATION SOCIALE
d'Ottawa



OTTAWA COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS FOR HEALTH EQUITY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

YouVoice Ottawa is a community-based participatory action research project initiated by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa. It is a project for racialized youth by racialized youth, where youth are able to share their story and experiences with mental health whilst informing the development of culturally-responsive and anti-racist mental health resources in the community.

Goal:

To create a platform for racialized youth between the ages of 16 to 24 to explore issues related to mental health and to inform the development of inclusive mental health resources in the community.

Objectives

1. To give voice and autonomy to racialized youth in marginalized communities to share their story/experiences with mental health, using non-traditional, participatory research methods.
2. To provide an opportunity for youth development by way of learning new skills (i.e., photography, self-reflection), developing bonds with other racialized youth in the community and advocating for inclusive mental health resources.
3. To share findings with local decision-makers and organizations about the challenges racialized

YouVoice Ottawa took place from October 2020 to April 2021 and was overlooked by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa's Health Services Researcher and Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) comprised of youth from different racialized backgrounds and intersectional identities who are actively involved in the Ottawa community. The project team developed a mixed-method approach that included Photovoice and a survey questionnaire to deeply understand the topic of mental health as it pertains to racialized youth and to explore in-depth the current experiences and barriers racialized youth face when accessing mental health supports. The project uses a participatory framework that views community members as partners in the research process and experts on the issues of concern in their lives.

To accomplish the goals and objectives of the project, the first phase of YouVoice Ottawa involves three main stages: (1) **Data Collection**, (2) **Results** and (3) **Discussion**.

Based on the results of Photovoice and the survey, two list of factors were outlined that contribute to negative and positive mental health which are as followed:

Factors Contributing to Negative Mental Health	Factors Promoting Positive Mental Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Loneliness and stress attributed to COVID-19•Cultural stigma related to mental health•Racism and discrimination•Lack of resources in the community•Financial barrier to mental health supports•Age restrictions to social and community programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Social support system including family and friends, and religion and faith•No-to-low cost programs•Passion for social justice•Feeling safe•Workplace and Employment Opportunities•Nature and outdoors•Food

The above factors were synthesized into recommendations to implement inclusive programs and activities that would promote racialized youth’s mental wellness. Below are a series of recommended programs and activities:

1) 1:1 Peer Supports

- Social support and safe space for youth who have been feeling socially disconnected and away from friends and family
- Youth matched with someone from a similar background (e.g., black, newcomer, LGBTQ, disability)
- Mentorship component to the program where youth are able to refer and connect each other to resources in the community

2) Political Activism

- Focused on social justice issues (e.g., lack of resources in the community, homeless population during pandemic and winter)
- Engaging with city officials and mental health agencies to promote change within mental health system in Ottawa (i.e., access to support, funding for programs, etc.) organizations/agencies, etc.)

3) Educational Workshops with Older Ethnocultural Communities

- There is a currently a cultural gap when it comes to mental health between younger and older ethnocultural groups
- For older groups, there's a lot of cultural stigma and myths surrounding mental health
- Therefore, ethnocultural youth are passionate about bridging this gap to destigmatize mental health and promote awareness of it

4) In-Person Youth Programming

- There is a lack of programs catered to older youth between the ages of 18-29 years old and there is a strong need for more opportunities for youth to socially connect with other youth
- In-person youth programming can fulfill the social disconnect youth have been experiencing due to the pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions

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INTRODUCTION

YouVoice Ottawa is a community-based participatory action research project initiated by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa. It is a project for racialized youth by racialized youth, where youth are able to share their story and experiences with mental health whilst informing the development of culturally-responsive and anti-racist mental health resources in the community.

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To create a platform for racialized youth between the ages of 16 to 24 to explore issues related to mental health and to inform the development of inclusive mental health resources in the community.

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- 1) To give voice and autonomy to racialized youth in marginalized communities to share their story/experiences with mental health, using non-traditional, participatory research methods.
- 2) To provide an opportunity for youth development by way of learning new skills (i.e., photography, self-reflection), developing bonds with other racialized youth in the community and advocating for inclusive mental health resources.
- 3) To share findings with local decision-makers and organizations about the challenges racialized

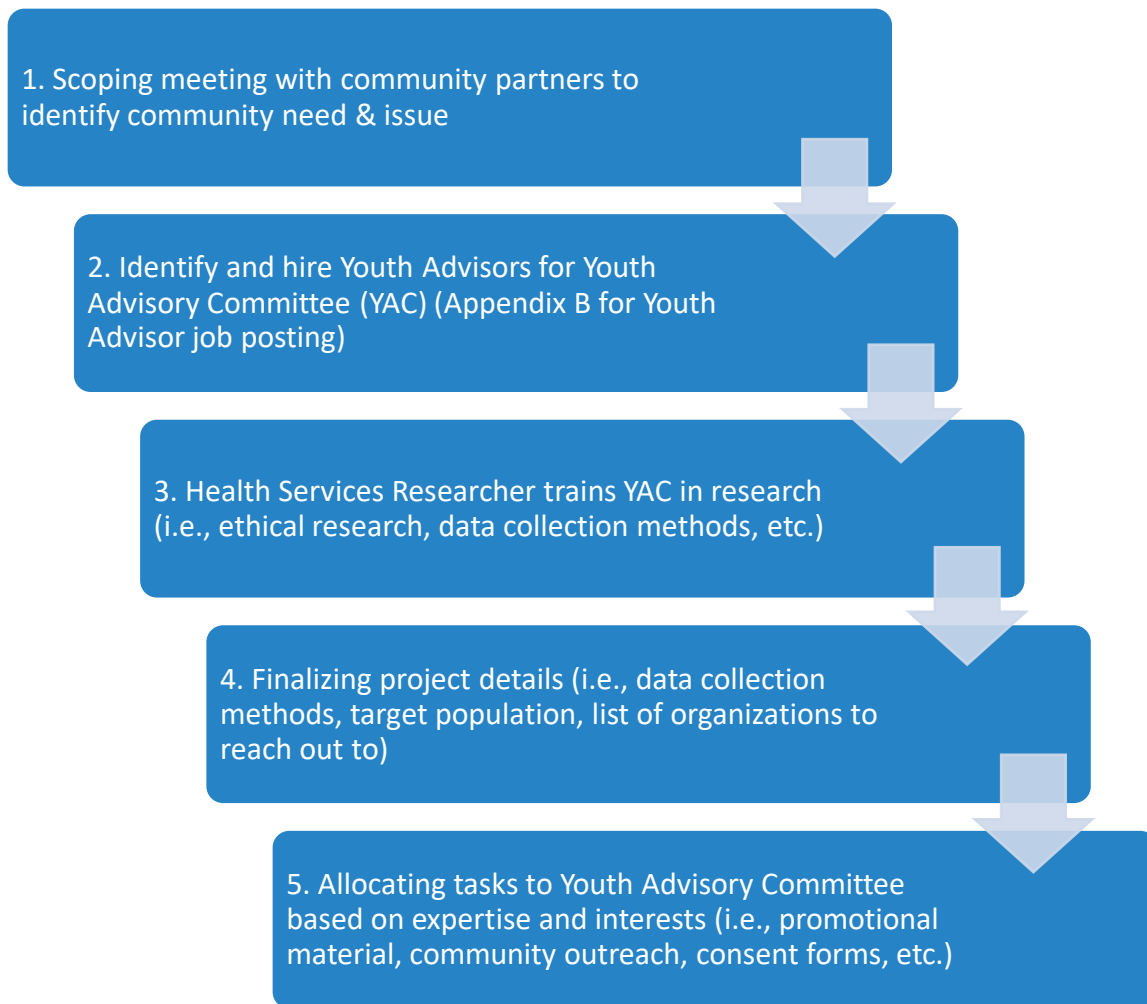
To accomplish the project goal and objectives, YouVoice Ottawa involved three main stages:

- I. Data Collection**
- II. Results**
- III. Discussion**

YouVoice Ottawa took place from October 2020 to April 2021 and was overlooked by SPC's Health Services Researcher, and a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) comprised of youth from different racialized backgrounds and intersectional identities who are actively involved in the Ottawa community. The committee developed a mixed-method approach to deeply understand the topic of mental health as it pertains to racialized youth and to explore in-depth the current experiences and barriers racialized youth face when accessing mental health supports. The first method selected by the YAC was Photovoice, where participants were asked to take photographs of things in their daily lives that represent specific topics related to mental health. Participants were then asked to reflect on their

photos before participating in a group narrative analysis process which delved deeper into the themes captured in their photos. The second method implemented was a Survey/Questionnaire that collected demographic information about participating racialized youth, their perceptions on mental health and challenges they have faced when accessing mental health support in the community.

Below is a step-by-step of the planning process involved in YouVoice Ottawa, where details of the project were determined prior to implementation. A detailed step-by-step of the planning process can be found in [Appendix A](#).



DATA COLLECTION

METHOD #1: PHOTOVOICE

Description

Photovoice is a community-based participatory action research method that allows people to “identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique” (Strack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004). It aims to empower participants and “induce change by informing policy makers of community assets and deficits” (Strack et al., 2004). Photovoice is especially useful for youth because it provides them with the opportunity to develop their identity and “a social morality for becoming a positive agent within their communities and society” (Strack et al., 2004). Photovoice demonstrates in a meaningful and candid way how youth view the concept of mental health and the pathways to maintaining ‘good mental health.’ Conversely, the results from Photovoice will demonstrate what needs to be changed in order to promote youth mental wellness in Ottawa.

The participants attended various Photovoice sessions to learn the key concepts of the Photovoice method, how to properly take images to tell a story, and went through a consent process with the Youth Advisors. Participants were then tasked with four framing questions that prompted them to take photos of things in their daily lives that represented mental health and wellness. Framing questions are “questions posed to participants to answer through taking a photo,” and they provide participants with a guide to “examine their lived experiences” (Foster-Fishman, Mortensen, Berkowitz, Nowell, & Lichty, 2013). The participants further reflected on their photos using Photo Reflection Forms before participating in a follow-up group discussion in order to develop their individual stories and expand on the themes and messages captured in their photos. At the last Photovoice session, participants contributed to what the final communication strategy for Photovoice would look like, including the final presentation tool and specific mental health-centred programs to ensure their voice is heard among local decision-makers and community organization circles. More details about the Photovoice sessions can be found in [Appendix B](#).

It is worth noting that at the start and end of each Photovoice session, the YAC shared this resource to participating youth seeking professional mental health support: <https://www.mhcsukanya.com/>.

Framing Questions

1. *What does mental health look like for you?*
2. *What makes you sad?*
3. *What makes you happy?*
4. *What does your safe space look like?*

Registration and Zoom Platform

Youth registered for the Photovoice sessions using a zoom registration link. The location of the sessions was all on zoom due to the pandemic and COVID-19 restrictions.

Dates

Participants representing the racialized youth population undertook the project on the following dates:

February 8th, 16th, 22nd and March 1st.

Materials Provided:

- Consent forms to be signed by interested participants (and their parents or guardians if the participant is under 18 years of age) ([Appendix E](#))
- Photo Reflection Form ([Appendix F](#))
- Photo Release Form ([Appendix G](#))

Honorarium:

- A Certificate of Community Engagement ([Appendix H](#))
- \$25 Amazon E-Gift Cards for Participation

Images Accepted:

- Photographs taken on camera and/or phone
- Paintings
- Drawings
- If necessary, online images

METHOD #2: SURVEY/QUESTIONNAIRE

Description

The survey collected demographic information and youth's perception of both positive and negative mental health. The survey complemented the results for Photovoice and provided further context about how youth perceive mental health as well as what mental health support they see lacking in the community and would like to see more of. The findings will be shared and disseminated to various community partners and organizations to inform the development and delivery of anti-racist and culturally-responsive mental health services, programs and resources that specifically meet the needs of racialized youth in Ottawa.

Dates

In partnership with community organizations, interested participants representing the racialized youth population completed the survey from January 22nd to March 5th of 2021.

Honorarium:

- Raffle to win a \$25 Amazon e-Gift Cards

Survey Questions

The survey was a mixture of open-ended and closed-ended questions which were divided into two main sections: Demographics and Mental Health. **Table 1** has the list of survey questions asked to participants on SurveyMonkey.

Table 1: The Community Feedback on Mental Health Survey

<p>1. Do you agree to the above terms and conditions for participating? By clicking Yes, you consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Yesb. No
Demographic Questions
<p>2. Are you a member of any organizations?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Yesb. Noc. Prefer not to answer <p>3. Is yes, what organization are you a part of? _____</p> <p>4. How old are you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. 16-20 years oldb. 21-24 years oldc. 25+d. Prefer not to answer <p>5. What best describes your current occupation/employment status?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Studentb. Employed/Full-timec. Freelance/Part-timed. Unemployede. Other (please specify): _____ <p>6. What gender do you best identify with?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Man (incl. "Cis or trans")b. Woman (incl. "Cis or trans")c. Non-binaryd. Questioninge. Prefer not to sayf. Other (please specify): _____ <p>7. What is your ethnic, cultural or racial group?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. White or Europeanb. Black or African Canadianc. Indigenous or Aboriginal (First Nations, Metis, Inuit)d. Asian/East Indian/Middle Easterne. Other Pacific Islanderf. Other (please specify): _____ <p>8. What is your highest level of education achieved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. No formal educationb. Completed Secondary/High School diplomac. Completed Undergraduate degree/College diplomad. Completed Masters/Doctorate degreee. Other (please specify): _____ <p>9. What is your native language?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Englishb. Frenchc. Other (please specify): _____ <p>10. How long have you been in Canada?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Canadian-born

- b. 0-5 years
- c. 6-10 years
- d. 10+ years

Mental Health

11. **What does the term “mental health” mean to you?** _____
12. **What areas of life impact your health?** [Rating: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always]
- a. School
 - b. Workplace
 - c. Family
 - d. Friends
 - e. Gender/sexuality
 - f. Racial identity
 - g. Body image
 - h. Intimate relationships
13. **What do you feel are the common mental health challenges?** [Rating: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always]
- a. Anxiety
 - b. Stress
 - c. Depression
 - d. Loneliness
 - e. Addictions
 - f. Suicidal thoughts
 - g. Trauma
14. **Have you received mental health support from any of the following?**
- a. Family
 - b. Friends
 - c. Educational Institutions
 - d. Community Centre
 - e. Religious/Faith Organizations
 - f. Health Institutions
 - g. Other (please specify): _____
15. **From a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your overall mental health?** [1=poor, 5=great]
- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5
16. **Have you ever accessed mental health support in your community?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Do not know
 - d. Prefer not to answer
17. **Have you faced any challenges or barriers accessing mental health support in Canada?**
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Do not know
 - d. Prefer not to answer

18. **What challenges or barriers do you think are there in accessing mental health support in Canada? [Rating: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree]**
- Financial
 - Social Stigma/Family Support
 - Discrimination or Racism
 - Cultural Background
 - Religion/Faith
19. **What do you think makes access to mental health support difficult in your community? [Rating: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree]**
- Lack of referrals or follow-ups
 - Waitlist
 - Location
 - Language barriers
20. **How would you rate your community's support regarding mental health support?**
- Poor
 - Fair
 - Good
 - Excellent
 - Not Applicable
21. **How would you rate your community on awareness towards mental health?**
- Poor
 - Fair
 - Good
 - Excellent
 - No Applicable
22. **Are you aware of the mental health resources available in your community?**
- Yes
 - No
 - Prefer not to answer
23. **What kind of mental health support would you like to see in your community? _____**
24. **Please check if you would like to receive email updates about upcoming projects from YouVoice Ottawa**
- Yes
 - No
25. **If yes, what is your email address? _____**

METHOD #3: LITERATURE

The third data gathering tool is a literature review, to triangulate and strengthen the results generated from Photovoice and the survey. Information from the literature review is integrated into the discussion of this report. The documents reviewed include academic journal articles, literature reviews, government reports, reports on various topics related to mental health (e.g., youth mental health, cultural stigma and mental health, etc.) and the grey literature.

RESULTS

PHOTOVOICE: IMAGES AND NARRATIVES

At each weekly Photovoice session, there were 5-8 alternating racialized youth present, in addition to the eight members of the project team. Along with participating youth, the project team also participated in sharing their photos and narratives each week. With each discussion, there was a narrative analysis process to identify common themes and messages collectively stemming from the photos. Below are the resulting Photovoice images and narratives sectioned by framing question.

FRAMING QUESTION #1: WHAT DOES MENTAL HEALTH LOOK LIKE FOR YOU?



ARDAC

“My picture has 4 points about Mental Health for me:

- 1- Keep smiling 😊
- 2- Love eating 🍷
- 3- The spirit of nature 🍀
- 4- Friendship 👫”



KAMILA

"It is a picture I had taken of my brother. In a sense it represents how I see mental health issues. He is reading the newspaper which is a very mundane activity, yet the paper is burning. I felt it captured that feeling of having so much going on that other people can't necessarily see or understand."

**Thank you my little
green leaf. You got my
back. I am feeling
secure.**



SHIREEN

"What mental health looks like to me is feeling secure. As a recent immigrant who is going through major challenges and changes with respect to culture, community and workplace. It is crucial to maintain a healthy and positive mindset in order to function properly. These challenges have been eliminated through family support and warmth."



NEAMA

“A picture my friend took of me taking a walk outside at night. This picture represents the importance of friendship and being outside/getting fresh air during a pandemic which has been stressful.”



BETUL

“When I think about my mental health and look at the pictures I took so far this was the closest picture to represent. A huge door opening up to a deep forest. A forest yet to be fully discovered. It is important for people to understand from this photo that you should be open about your mental health in order to take care of it so go through that door and discover.”



NAHIT

"I choose this photo because family is important for mental health and smiling is important in family. I like smiling and I want to be happy. Look carefully into the eyes of the child to better understand this photo."



FURKAN

"Mental health is being brave enough to follow your dreams with no fear and pressure to fit in."



MUSAB

"For me mental health is the people you are with. That when I am at my best and is when I am with my family."

FRAMING QUESTION #2: WHAT MAKES YOU SAD?



AYAN

“Cold weather. Cold weather is especially difficult for those who are both homeless and going through this pandemic.”



BETUL

“Even though its good to be alone sometimes, my biggest fear and sad time of my life is when im alone. Especially being alone in a rainy and cloudy days. I dont know if its the weather but I became sad automatically.”



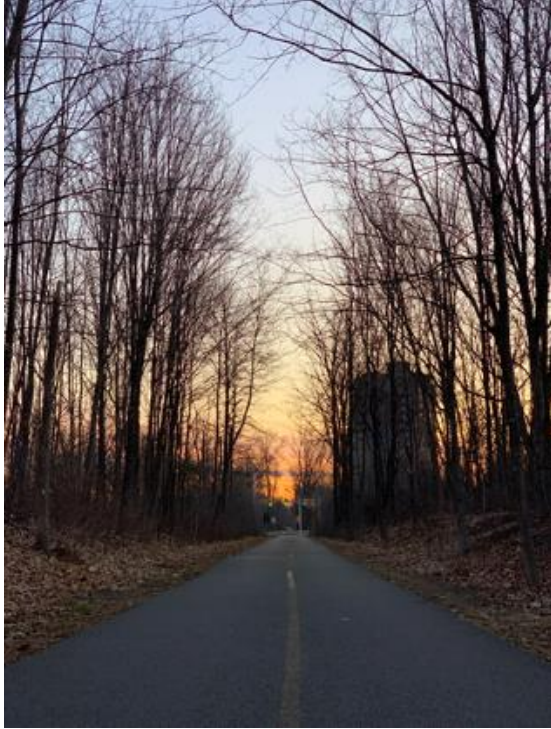
SHIREEN

"Sadness is being away from my loved ones"



NEAMA

"The last photo makes me sad because the blue person is my dad and the grey one are me my mom and my sister. I haven't seen my dad in 3 or more years, and right now his alone and not being able to see him makes me sad and it also worries me a lot."



BETUL

"It is a sunrise picture, which means I didn't sleep all night and going for a walk to relax and get away from my thoughts. The times where I thought "Knowledge is curse", "Can I just throw my brain and not think?". Being sad for other people and constantly thinking about the issues in the world definitely a saddest part of life. Cant help but think."



NAHIT

"Forest fires make me unhappy. I am very sorry for animals in forest fires. I feel bad when the trees burn. Forests are important for sustainable environment."



FURQAN

"Pandemic makes me really sad. Empty streets, not being able to hang out with friends and having almost no connection with loved ones."



ARDAC

“Sense of chaos and living in a space that is disrespectful and irresponsible. This makes me feel like my life is not in order.”



MUSAB

“I want to share this photo because this is what triggers my mental health. That I like boundaries and I do not appreciate when people do not respect that.”

FRAMING QUESTION #3: WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?



NAHIT

“My favorite football team is Fenerbahçe and he is Alex de Souza the captain of Fenerbahçe. I love playing football. See the happiness in the eyes of the captain in this photo.”



BETUL

“A photo taken from Tobermory during a COVID summer, much needed break from work and school with my family. No internet, no work. Only me and the waves around 5am, breathing and not worrying about things.”



BETUL

“This photo shows my extrovert self in a very aesthetic and dark way. Having lots of friends and being happy with crowds. Having a companion with you during dark times, a friend who will wait for you at the end of the tunnel where there is light.”



NALAN

“This picture is a scenery from a sunny afternoon in the park. Imagining yourself with the sounds of birds and the image of the shining sun makes me happy and I believe it gives a happy and tranquil feeling to the person. The importance of this photo is that you are not alone. Even though the person supposes himself/herself alone in the forest, something is in perfect harmony and they are always with her/him. Nature is perfect and always vivid.”



NASRA

"This picture makes me happy because it includes two of my loves. My sister and hiking. My sister is my best friend and my source of support. Being outdoors with my sister is my safe space too. I love hiking because it is a form of exercise that involves sightseeing and getting fresh air."



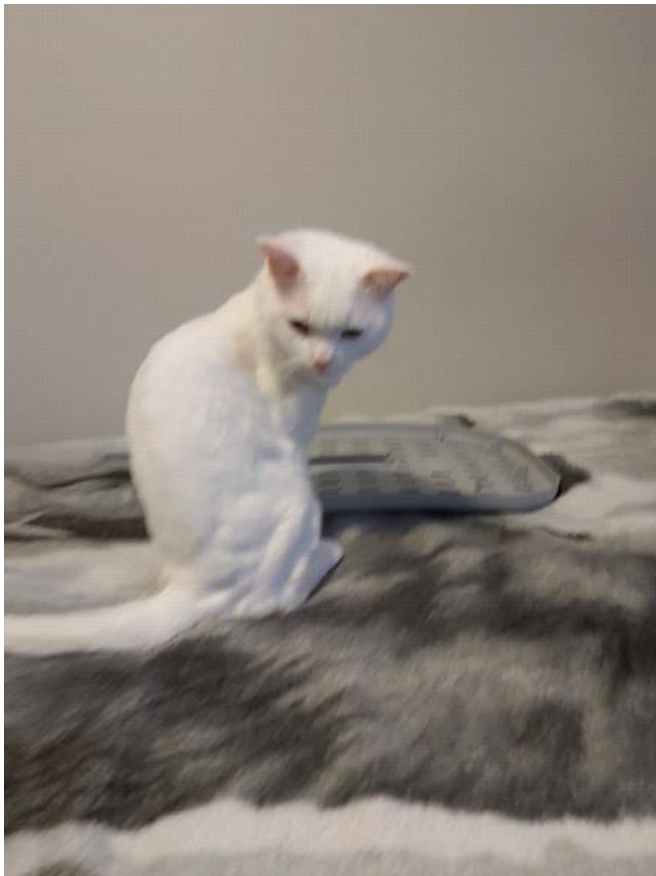
FURQAN

"Sunrise makes me happy. It tells us that every day is a fresh start with new hopes and reasons."



ARDAC

“What makes me happy is friendship and delicious foods.”



MUSAB

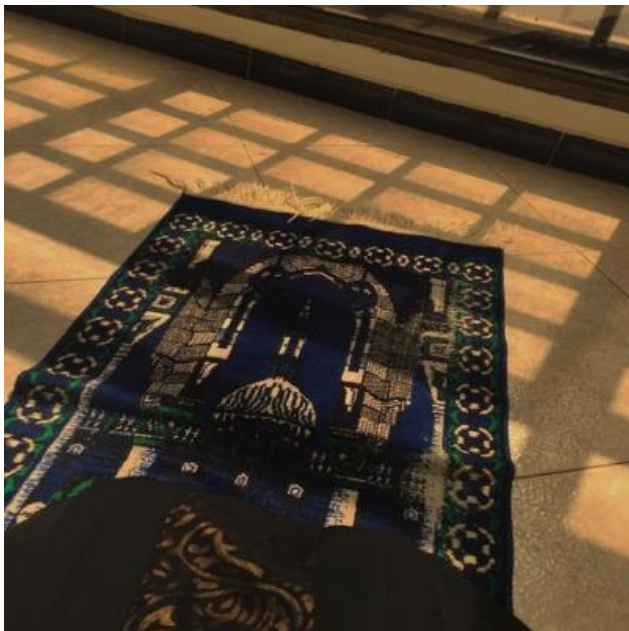
“This picture represents my happiness. During these hard and lonely times my roommates cat has helped to keep me sane and happy with its love and warmth.”

FRAMING QUESTION #4: WHAT DOES YOUR SAFE SPACE LOOK LIKE?



NALAN

"This photo was from the time where I got to spend my 3 month summer vacation in the western side of Turkey. this place was my secure place throughout my holiday and I found peace and secureness while I was there. I want to share this photo because it's important to see that somethings in life sometimes come to an end, just like this sunset. Rather than making people lonely, it should make people courageous and strong towards darkness. The message that I want to convey to people is that strength is in you. You are capable of standing up for yourself."



NEAMA

"The prayer mat signifies my connection to God. When I pray, I feel a sense of relief and that I'm being heard and not judged. Inside me I know he is the most forgiving, most merciful."



SHIREEN

“My parents house is my safe place. It gives me the sensation of warmth, love and kindness throughout childhood memories and family gatherings.”



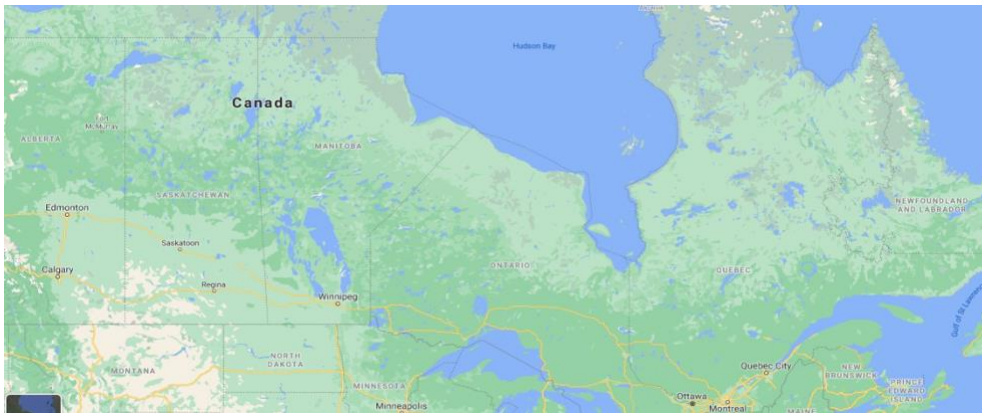
NAHIT

“The wall with photos at home reminds me of my old happy memories.”



FURQAN

“My safe space is the sky because there no limits, judgment, biases on the sky.”



ARDAC

“The place that your voice matters, your opinion matters, and in where you feel that you have a value as a human. For that reason, Canada is my safe space.”



MUSAB

“Nature is a place I go to recharge myself both mentally and physically. That sometimes I get tired but I recharge myself by getting fresh air and being with nature.”



BETUL

“I think it shows my safe space perfectly, all the things I like on one desk at my parents house. I think it shows my calm studying when I like something my safe space in my study.”

PHOTOVOICE: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS PROCESS

Each week, participating youth were guided through a narrative analysis process by the project team to identify common themes and messages collectively stemming from their photos. It was equally important to give space for youth to outline community assets and deficits and discuss what was important for decision-makers and the community to understand about their photos.

Table 2 outlines the specific themes that stood out from the Photovoice images and narrative analysis discussion.

Table 2: An outline of specific themes about photos and responses to, ‘what is important for decision-makers and the community to understand about your photos?’

Framing Question	Themes	What is important for decision-makers and the community to understand about your photos?
Framing Question #1: What does mental health look like for you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sense of resiliency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Love and affection from a cat, friend or family member during 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Access to resources such as healthcare, food, friendships/social supports, ability to work, nature

	<p>these difficult times and being alone</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How mental health is stigmatized and people may not know what's going on - there's no shame in seeking help and someone to talk to when you have mental health issues • Solidarity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Not the only one going through challenges during this time ○ We can get through this together • Importance of having a mental health support system - e.g., cats, family, light 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of having a mental health support system - e.g., cats, family, light <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Comforting to have your supports such as a pet around esp. during difficult time • Being alone may cause dark thoughts but if you have social support beside you, you don't think about the darkness
<p>Framing Question #2: What makes you sad?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being away from loved ones in a different country - not seeing them for months or years due to covid and other life events • Losing connection to outside world due to the pandemic • Feelings of isolation • Educating ourselves on social justice • Turkish prisoners including mothers and their children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Record of women, babies, pregnant women in prison ○ Human rights issue ○ Standing up for women's rights = protests • Homelessness and how stressful and life-altering it is - esp. during the winter and COVID • Missing family, friends and old life • Disruption of feeling safe and at peace especially at home, which should be a person's sanctuary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More funding for social service and community programs for older youth between the ages of 18-29 years old <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are so many programs for youth between 12-18 but not enough for older youth • Your wellness is tied to community wellness therefore we must think about other people who are suffering or marginalized in our community • Homelessness is a huge issue in Ottawa • Supports for people grieving loss due to COVID = loss of loved one, loss of connection, loss of old life • COVID has dramatically changed our lives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Daily life has changed = unemployment, lack of interaction with others, etc. ○ Lost lives ○ Feeling undecided on things ○ Elders feeling disconnected due to lack of knowledge of technology <p>Racialized patients not being treated the same way as white patients</p>
<p>Framing Question #3: What makes you happy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarity when going through mental health problems - need their support systems/network in place (e.g., family, friend) • Isolation is detrimental to mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer-to-peer support; especially during social disconnect during the pandemic • Hybrid program; mentor and meeting as a group once a week

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social circles are vital • Snacks; double stuffed oreos • Green space and outdoors; nature; outdoor activities; mindful; meditation; self-awareness in nature • My family and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regularly meeting allows groups get to know each other better ○ More comfortable with a smaller group • Doing something outdoors in green space is good for your mind; more outdoor activities where we practice mindfulness and self-awareness if nature • Snacks bring youth joy; bring snacks to future events and programs
<p>Framing Question #4: What does your safe space look like?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith & Relationship with God is important <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The prayer mat signifies my connection to God when I pray. I feel a sense of relief and that I'm being heard and not judged. Inside me I know he is the most forgiving, most merciful. ○ Created a temple at home because prayer temples remind me of home ○ Meditative – praise to God, celebrate holidays, Diwali and Holi ○ Remembering God • With loved ones (i.e., family) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feeling most safe with family ○ My home with my parents ○ Safest with loved ones ○ Sharing feelings and emotions ○ My sanctuary is where family gathers • Nature: Blue sky with clouds, clouds and plants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Feeling peace ○ Makes me feel grounded ○ Sanctuary • Canada <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safe space is where your faith, beliefs matter ○ Where legislation is determined by law and not dictatorship ○ Free human being ○ Feel human here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe space is where your faith, beliefs matter; where you feel fully accepted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prayer space ○ Nature ○ Loved ones ○ With God ○ Outside <p>More opportunities for practising meditation, yoga and mindfulness outdoors in nature</p>

POST-PHOTOVOICE BRAINSTORMING SESSION

After the Photovoice activities concluded, we invited youth back to a brainstorming session on how to communicate the results from Photovoice to the public and create social change in the community.

The brainstorming session was optional and did not include an incentive. We had a total of six youth attend and we asked them the following questions:

- Where and how do you want the results from Photovoice and/or survey to be shown or communicated to the community?
- Should we collaborate with similar community organizations or initiatives (i.e., Youth Voices Ottawa)?

Based on the discussion, participating youth identified creating a **digital storytelling video** as a communication strategy to promote the findings of the Photovoice portion of the project to the community. Digital storytelling involves creating a “3-5 min video that integrates multimedia materials including photos, participant voices, drawings, and music” (Rieger et al., 2018). It is a great way to meaningfully share participants’ photos and lived experiences while simultaneously promoting community dialogue about mental health issues that are pressing to youth. Digital storytelling is also a useful knowledge translation tool to “share participants’ stories with diverse audiences and engage healthcare professionals in critical reflection of their practice” and “decreasing the time between knowledge generation and knowledge implementation” (Rieger et al., 2018). The video was put together by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa’s Communication Team. The final video can be found [here](#).

SURVEY

The Data Analyst cleaned and analyzed the survey data using **Tableau**, a data visualization tool that helps with understanding the collected data more clearly.

DEMOGRAPHICS

In our study, we surveyed a total of 72 racialized youth located in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. In the first part of the survey, we asked respondents demographic questions. A summary of the results of the demographic questions are as follows:

- 51% of the respondents are male
- 46% of the respondents are female
- 74% of respondents' native language is English
- 63% of respondents are employed either full-time or part-time
- 55% of respondents are between the age of 16 to 24 years old
- 57% of respondents are Black or African Canadian
- 26% are Indigenous/Aboriginal
- 15% are Asian/East Indian/Middle Eastern
- 54% of respondents are Canadian-born
- 53% of respondents completed an undergraduate degree or college diploma

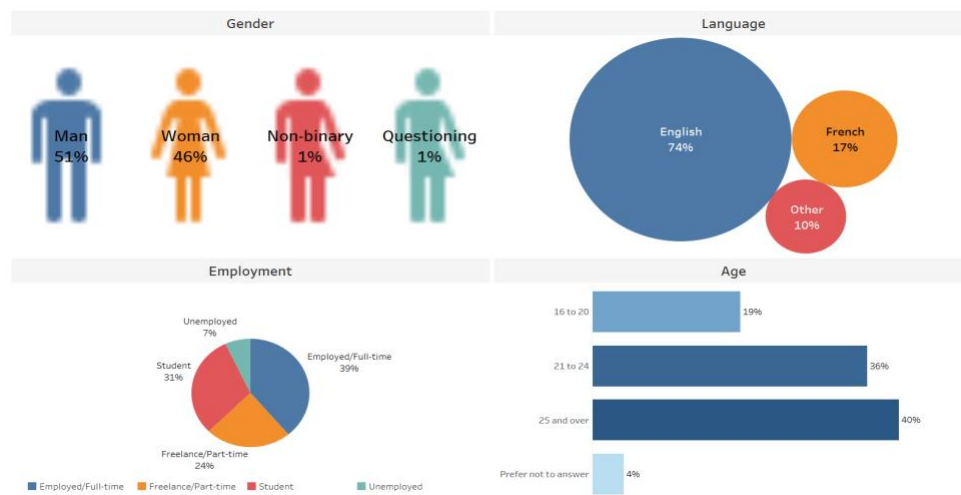


Figure 1: Demographic Information on Gender, Language, Employment & Age Collected from Participating Youth in the Survey

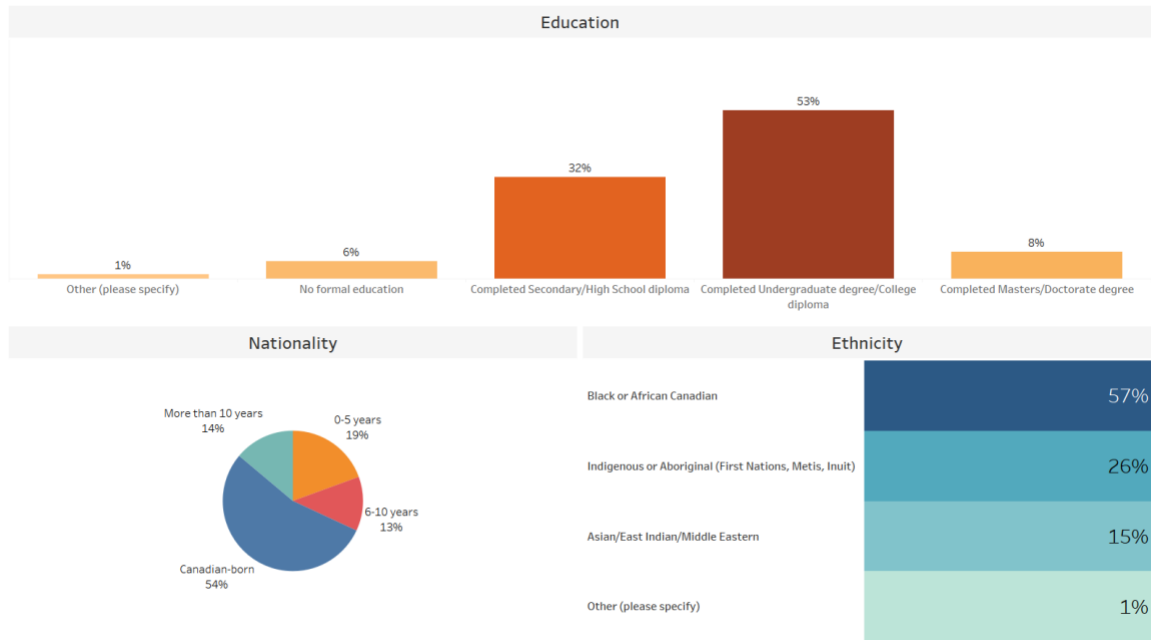


Figure 2: Demographic Information on Education, Nationality & Ethnicity Collected from Participating Youth in the Survey

MENTAL HEALTH & COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

In the second part of the survey, we asked study participants several questions about their mental health and mental health support in the community. When survey respondents were asked to describe mental health, most responses include comments such as having a good mental state, being happy internally, and having stable health both physically and psychologically.

A few examples of the comments for the question of what does the term "mental health" means to you include the following:

“Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” (Male, Black or African Canadian, 21 to 24 years old)

“Mental health refers to the wellness and regulation of my emotions and feelings. Just like physical health, mental health must be nurtured and cared for to ensure a fully robust individual.” (Women, Asian/East Indian/Middle Eastern, 21 to 24 years old)

“Be responsible for yourself and your family” (Woman, Indigenous or Aboriginal (First Nations, Metis, Inuit), 21 to 24 years old)

CHALLENGES ACCESSING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT IN CANADA

Following the questions regarding mental health support in the community, we then asked respondents whether they faced any challenges or barriers accessing mental health support in Canada. The results show that a total of 44% of respondents have faced challenges or barriers. With a follow-up question, we asked respondents what challenges or barriers they think are there to access mental health support in Canada. Within the 44% of respondents that have faced challenges or barriers, 55% answered religion/faith as the biggest barrier and 48% answered financial costs as the next barrier.

Furthermore, following 35% of respondents not accessing mental health support in their community, we then asked respondents what they think makes access to mental health support difficult in their community based on a list of text responses. As a result, among the 35% of respondents not accessing mental health support in their community, 38% of respondents agree that lack of referrals or follow-ups presents difficulty accessing mental health support.

YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Lastly, we asked survey respondents what kind of mental health support they would like to see in their community. Some of the most common themes among the respondents' comments include having support for students, relationships/family supports, and individual support, including psychological and spiritual services. Examples of comments for this question include the following:

“Free drop-in virtual/in-person counselling sessions, and subsidies for accessing a counsellor on a regular basis” (Woman, Asian/East Indian/Middle Eastern, 21 to 24 years old)

“About how to communicate with people parents, like people, and my teacher” (Woman, Indigenous or Aboriginal (First Nations, Metis, Inuit), 16 to 20 years old)

“Organize beneficial collective activities and cultivate good psychological characteristics” (Woman, Asian/East Indian/Middle Eastern, 21 to 24 years old)

DISCUSSION

Over the last few decades, the demographic of Ottawa has shifted toward greater diversity. This requires greater awareness of meeting the needs of ethnocultural and racial minorities in the mental health system. In the mental health sphere, cultural competence recognizes an individuals' culture during treatment and aims to develop "a set of skills, knowledge and policies to deliver effective treatments" (Satcher, 2001). To relate this concept back to the scope of YouVoice Ottawa, treatment can go beyond its medical terminology and toward service provision and program development. Services tailored to culture are more welcoming and encourage racialized individuals to participate in community-based programs whilst improving their mental health outcomes. The term competence places accountability on service providers and mental health practitioners – most of whom are white – it challenges them to design and deliver culturally appropriate services with the participation of consumers, families and communities (Satcher, 2001).

The goal of YouVoice Ottawa is to inform the development of inclusive mental health resources in the community for racialized youth. Thus, it is imperative to discuss the themes and messages captured in Photovoice and from the survey responses and to synthesize these results into factors that contribute to negative and positive mental health outcomes in an effort to create culturally competent and appropriate mental health supports in the community.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO NEGATIVE MENTAL HEALTH

1. LONELINESS & STRESS ATTRIBUTED TO COVID-19

Based on our survey, the most common mental health challenges found in youth include loneliness and stress. Our study shows that 70% of respondents have experienced loneliness, and 65% of respondents have faced stress. A possible reason for receiving a high number of respondents with these mental health challenges may be due to the ongoing event of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic requires individuals to self-isolate and stay-at-home to protect each other from the COVID-19 disease has caused an increase in cases of loneliness among youth. Schools have adopted remote learning, ensuing in youth staying at home. As a result, students experience loneliness due to a lack of participation in social activities, including connecting with friends, participating in sports, and school

field trips. The uncertainty of the pandemic, as well as daily COVID-19 news updates, has led to long-term stress for many youth. Over time, stress can strain one's body and lead to other mental and physical health problems. Some causes of stress that affect youth include school examinations, cyberbullying, bereavement, lack of exercise, and insomnia.

Photovoice youth reported "losing connection to the outside world due to the pandemic", "feelings of isolation" and missing their old life. These results emphasize the importance of social support, as Photovoice youth so adequately put it, "being alone may cause dark thoughts but if you have social support beside you, you don't think about the darkness."

2. CULTURAL STIGMA RELATED TO MENTAL HEALTH

The stigmatization of mental health in racialized and ethnocultural communities was a common trend in Photovoice and the survey. Many of the ethnocultural youth who participated are uncertain about seeking help or sharing their mental health issues with their family or community due to conflicting cultural views. One of the surveyed youth who identified as Indigenous/Aboriginal suggested support in discussing mental health with "parents...people, and my teacher." This coincides with Photovoice youth mentioning that, "mental health is stigmatized and people may not know what's going on but there's no shame in seeking help and someone to talk to when you have mental health issues." This rhetoric was also shared in our post-Photovoice brainstorming session, where it was collectively agreed upon that there's a major gap in mental health awareness between younger and older ethnocultural generations. Cultures may differ in the meaning and level of importance or concern they give to mental health or illness. Culture also affects how people describe their symptoms of mental illness, such as whether they choose to describe emotional or physical symptoms. Studies have shown that Asian patients tend to report somatic symptoms first and then later describe their emotions when further questioned or asked more specifically (Satcher, 2001).

Research indicates that culture determines "whether people even seek help in the first place, what types of help they seek, what types of coping styles and social supports they have, and how much stigma they attach to mental illness" (Satcher, 2001). Culture affects how people present their symptoms to reflect a 'culturally appropriate' way that won't reflect badly on them. For example, in some Asian cultures, "stigma can be so bad that mental illness is thought to reflect poorly on family lineage and thereby diminishes marriage and economic prospects for other family members as well" (Satcher, 2001).

Differing cultural viewpoints on mental health can also provide an opportunity for dialogue, mutual understanding and can build bridges between older and younger generations. In Canada, mental health support and treatment has a medical or clinical association and comes in the form of therapy/counselling and medication. Whereas in many ethnocultural and racial communities, mental illness is often treated through religion, spirituality, traditional herbal medicine, art therapy, creative expressions, and other forms of complementary medicine (Sarang et al., 2009). For example, Black Americans are more likely than whites to handle personal problems and distress by relying on their spirituality or faith for support (Satcher, 2001). Dialogue between younger and older ethnocultural groups can provide understanding between how each group perceives mental health, de-stigmatizes cultural misrepresentations about mental illness and empowers individuals to choose the best mental health support for them based on the existing medical/western and non-medical/cultural treatment options available (Sarang et al., 2009). Establishing harmony about how various cultures perceive and interpret mental health can allow youth to freely express themselves and their mental health, and still feel connected with their community.

3. RACISM & DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination and racism can lower an individual's access to resources and opportunities, such as housing, employment/hiring practices and in the administration of medical care and leads to diminished self-esteem and greater isolation and hopelessness thereby affecting seeking mental health support (Satcher, 2001). YouVoice Ottawa was structured as a project for racialized youth and as a result, there were issues related to discrimination and racism that were brought up when discussing access to mental health support. For example, Photovoice youth mentioned that racialized patients are "not being treated the same way as white patients when accessing mental health services," when they were asked what they wanted decision-makers and the community to understand about their images.

Similarly, in our survey, racial identity was found to impact youth's mental health. One's racial identity can also place a personal toll on the mindset and self-confidence of racialized youth. Nowadays, social movements and advocacy regarding anti-racism have placed a spotlight on racial identity. In our survey, we then asked participants to rate on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always) what areas of life impact their mental health. Based on the results, the average number of respondents ranked racial identity, workplace, and family as the three major areas that sometimes impact their mental health. As a result,

racial identity can negatively affect individuals psychologically by further intensifying mental health symptoms, including anxiety, depression, anger against equality, and social justice.

4. LACK OF RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY

For Photovoice youth, decision-makers and the community need to know that there is a need for more resources in healthcare, food security, employment, and general social supports and programs. This matches with our survey results which reported that 38% of survey respondents agree that lack of referrals or follow-ups presents difficulty accessing mental health supports. Survey respondents also indicated a need for having supports for students, relationships/family supports, and individual support, including psychological and spiritual services.

5. FINANCIAL BARRIER TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

In the survey, 44% of respondents said that they have faced challenges or barriers when accessing mental health supports, and in that group, 48% answered financial costs as one of their biggest barriers. A surveyed youth who identified as Asian/East Indian/Middle Eastern suggested “free drop-in virtual/in-person counselling sessions, and subsidies for accessing counsellor on a regular basis.” Support for mental health especially clinical support can be expensive and presents a major barrier for many youth.

6. AGE RESTRICTIONS TO SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Photovoice youth highlighted that many social programs that exist in their community are catered to younger youth whereas there are not enough programs for older youth between the ages of 18-29 years old. Older youth have also been feeling the impacts of the pandemic and miss forming social connections therefore, the scope of social and community programs should be broadened to include older youth.

FACTORS PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH

1. SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEM

Social support can come in different channels and styles. In the survey, family, friends, and community centres were reported as the main support systems in addressing mental health challenges found in young people. This coincides with what Photovoice youth discussed when asked what was important for decision-makers and community members to understand about their pictures where unanimously, they mentioned the importance of a social support system especially during this difficult period of a pandemic.

1.1. SOCIAL SUPPORT: FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The survey and Photovoice results both indicate loved ones such as family and friends as supports for mental health. Often family and friends are the first responders for getting early help for the mental illness of their loved ones. Participating youth in the Photovoice discussion emphasized that a support system of family and friends is necessary and that one needs “familiarity when going through mental health problems” because you are “sharing feelings and emotions”. This connects with what an Indigenous youth in the survey mentioned about mental health meaning to “be responsible for yourself and your family”, connecting one’s mental health to their family. Some ways family and friends help people living with a mental illness include encouraging them to seek medical attention, promoting positive thoughts, and expressing concern and support.

The importance of family and friends has been accentuated even more since the pandemic started. Many of the participating youth in Photovoice are newcomers and immigrants and they are not only feeling socially disconnected but physically disconnected from family. For example, these were some of the responses collected for the framing question, ‘what makes you sad?’: “being away from loved ones in a different country” and “not seeing them for months or years due to COVID.”

1.2. SOCIAL SUPPORT: RELIGION & FAITH

In the survey, 44% of respondents have faced challenges or barriers when accessing mental health support, and among that group, 55% answered religion/faith as the biggest barrier. It could either be that someone’s religion or faith may deter them from seeking mental health support due to conflicting

views or that not enough mental health supports exist that integrate religion or faith into their services. Either way, faith and religion were important factors for Photovoice youth especially when discussing the framing question, “what does your safe space look like?” One of the youth took a picture of their prayer mat with the narrative, “the prayer mat signifies my connection to God. When I pray, I feel a sense of relief and that I’m being heard and not judged. Inside me I know he is the most forgiving, most merciful.” During the narrative analysis process for this question, what followed was youth discussing how practicing their faith and remembering God promotes their mental health, with one other youth who practices Hinduism mentioning how they “created a temple at home because prayer temples remind me of home” and that celebrating holidays such as Diwali and Holi bring them a sense of peace.

2. NO-TO-LOW-COST PROGRAMS

The financial barrier youth experience when accessing mental health support in their community can be resolved by implementing initiatives such as sports and other no-to-low-cost social programs for youth that focus on mental health and well-being. A surveyed youth who identified as Asian/East Indian/Middle Eastern suggested “free drop-in virtual/in-person counselling sessions, and subsidies for accessing counsellor on a regular basis.” This coincides with what was discussed in the post-Photovoice brainstorming session where youth outlined a series of different programs that are no-to-low-cost and/or utilize existing resources in the community such as after-school youth clubs located at various schools, art sessions (e.g., making slime, drawing, painting, photography) and outdoor meditation and mindfulness exercises.

Community centres are also great resources for delivering mental health support and programs to tackle individuals’ issues. In our survey, community centres were marked as one of the top mental health supports that youth access. Thus, community centres can provide individuals with resources, including counselling and social programs to reduce stress due to the COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown. Subsequently, community centres can also speak to the social determinates of mental health by undertaking concerns in food insecurity, housing, and unemployment.

3. PASSION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Youth are passionate about social justice issues and it was mentioned by Photovoice youth that, “wellness is tied to community wellness therefore, we must think about other people who are suffering or marginalized in our community.”

Social justice means “fairness as it manifests in society”, and it includes fairness in education, employment, housing and healthcare (Human Rights Careers, n.d.). Social justice depends on four principles: **human rights**, **access**, **participation**, and **equity** (Human Rights Careers, n.d.).

- **Human rights:** Refers to a just society that protects and respects all members of society
- **Access:** Increasing and restoring access to essentials like shelter, food, education and other resources regardless of gender, race or class
- **Participation:** Social justice isn’t possible when some voices are heard and others are silenced – solutions for social justice only work when those most marginalized and affected are actively participating in the process
- **Equity:** “Takes into account the effects of discrimination and aims for an equal outcome” for all parties (Human Rights Careers, n.d.)

A few social justice issues that were mentioned by participants include babies and mothers imprisoned in Turkey, gender equality and standing up for women’s rights, and the homelessness issue in Ottawa. There was a strong representation of Turkish youth apart of Photovoice and it was during the Photovoice period that they organized an International Women’s Day protest with their community to protest domestic violence against women and femicides occurring inside Turkish prisons.

Homelessness in Ottawa is another social justice issue that was brought up by Photovoice participants. Homelessness is a stressful and life-altering experience, to not have the basic necessity of shelter especially during winter and COVID when stay-at-home orders have taken effect and homeless individuals do not have anywhere to go is difficult.

Overall, youth view themselves as positive social change agents. They are passionate about meaningfully contributing to society and informing change for the most marginalized members of society which can elicit feelings of purpose and promote positive mental health.

4. FEELING SAFE

A specific theme when delving into positive mental health is safety. Not only with regards to physical safety but emotional safety as well, where one can freely be and express themselves. Being around loved ones elicits feelings of safety and comfort, with Photovoice and survey youth repeatedly mentioning how they feel most safe with their family. Similarly, safety was mentioned by Photovoice youth with regards to religion and faith.

As previously noted, many of the youth that did participate in Photovoice were newcomers and some have immigrated from countries with unstable governments and extreme violence. Ardac, a racialized youth from Turkey took a screenshot of a photo of Canada as his Photovoice image, with a narrative that read, “the place that your voice matters, your opinion matters, and in where you feel that you have a value as a human. For that reason, Canada is my safe space.” When engaging in the Photovoice narrative analysis process for the framing question, ‘what makes you sad’, a specific theme that came up was that home should be a person’s sanctuary and when that sanctuary is disrupted, the feelings of safety and peace also dissipate. Thus, for many newcomers to Canada, they may have escaped their homes in an effort to regain peace and safety as a means to a better life, better mental health and as a means of making a new sanctuary.

5. WORKPLACE AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Having access to a healthy workplace and employment opportunities is important for one’s mental health. In our survey results, 62.5% of respondents are employed/full-time or freelance/part-time. On average, employees usually spend 4-8 hours a day at work. There are many factors at the workplace that can result in a person's mental health being challenged. In 2014, the Mental Health Commission of Canada launched a nationwide case study to understand how workplaces implement mental health practices (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2015). Based on the key findings in the report, 90% of the participating organizations noted “Protecting the psychological health of employees” as the most important reason to implement mental health standards (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2015). As workplaces can be fast-paced and stressful environments at times, in turn, can take an exhausting and lasting impact on one’s mental and physical health.

According to the results from the Photovoice project, mental health, as described by many respondents, is the ability to work and have access to social supports. One of the best practices to help people with mental health supports include listening and sharing one’s experiences. As mentioned in the Mental Health Commission of Canada case study, 60% of organizations are taking action to create respectful workplaces, enhance psychological health and safety knowledge among workers, and support work-life balance among workers (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2015). Creating an environment for workers to discuss openly and freely their thoughts and feelings can positively affect one’s mental health. Also, establishing social activities and mental health breaks in the workplace can decrease work-

related stress. Examples of social activities include having stress management training and building resilience through extra-curricular activities, including organizing sports and movie nights.

6. NATURE & OUTDOORS

With the weather warming up and many indoor recreational centres closed due to the pandemic, youth are excited about engaging in outdoor activities as a means for physical activity and to clear their mind. Photovoice youth unanimously shared how they view the outdoors and nature with its “blue sky”, “clouds and plants” as a sanctuary that makes them “feel grounded.” Service providers and community centres can provide opportunities to practice meditation, yoga and mindfulness outdoors in nature.

7. FOOD

Food is a motivational force and incentive for youth to attend events, programs and activities happening in their community. Breaking bread brings people of all walks of life together and brings youth joy. For example, Photovoice youth suggested bringing snacks to future events and programs, with one youth showing us a picture of food with the narrative, “what makes me happy is friendship and delicious foods.”

RECOMMENDED YOUTH PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

As a participatory action research project, YouVoice Ottawa is intended to act as a “power-equalizing, collaborative research approach that sees community members as partners in the research process and experts on the issues of concern in their lives” (Wallerstein & Duran, 2010). This includes shared leadership and collaborative decision-making between the researchers and community members. Based on the results from Photovoice, survey and discussions with youth, it was clear that youth wanted to engage in a series of different programs and activities that would promote mental well-being in Ottawa. This section outlines the various programs and activities recommended by participating youth from Photovoice and the survey.

1:1 PEER AND MENTORSHIP SUPPORT

This recommendation came out of Photovoice and the survey results, where youth indicated that they have been feeling lonely and want to build social connections and make new friends. During this time of COVID-19 where youth have been feeling socially disconnected and forced to be away from their friends, 1:1 peer and mentorship support programs are needed to promote mental wellness and social connection among youth.

At the brainstorming session we had with youth, they indicated how they would feel comfortable if they were to be matched with someone with a similar background to them, whether that be another youth who identifies as black, newcomer, LGBTQ2S+, or with a disability. Having a peer with similar lived experiences also creates a safe space for youth to express themselves and have someone that relates to their experiences, whether good or bad.

Youth also suggested adding a mentorship component to the program where youth can help each other navigate existing mental health supports and community resources.

Addresses the following factors related to negative mental health	Promotes the following factors related to positive mental health
✘ Cultural stigma related to mental health	✓ Social support system
✘ Racism and discrimination	✓ Feeling safe
	✓ Workplace and employment opportunities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Loneliness and stress attributed to COVID-19 ✗ Financial barrier to mental health supports ✗ Age restrictions to social and community programs 	
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YOUTH POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Inspired by social movements like Black Lives Matter and social justice issues youth are passionate about creating change within their communities and in society. They passionate about a multitude of issues that include but are not limited to the homeless population in Ottawa, Turkish mothers and babies imprisoned, advocating for more resources in the community and to reduce the financial barriers related to accessing mental health support. Human rights issues negatively impact mental health but advocating for change creates a sense of purpose and empowerment. Youth are interested in collaborating with other youth-based organizations and projects such as Youth Voices Ottawa which amplifies youth voices in the issues that they are passionate about.

Addresses the following factors related to negative mental health	Promotes the following factors related to positive mental health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Racism and discrimination ✗ Lack of resources in the community ✗ Financial barrier to mental health supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Feeling safe ✓ Passion for social justice

EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS WITH OLDER ETHNOCULTURAL COMMUNITIES

It was highlighted in our Photovoice activity and discussions that there is a major gap in mental health understanding between younger and older ethnocultural groups. Ethnocultural youth who took part in YouVoice Ottawa are passionate about dismantling cultural stereotypes and myths related to mental

health in their communities by engaging in conversation and workshops to bridge the gap about mental health between the younger and older generations. Dialogue between younger and older ethnocultural groups can provide understanding between how each group perceives mental health, aims to de-stigmatize cultural misrepresentations about mental illness and empowers individuals to choose the best mental health support for them based on existing medical/western and non-medical/cultural treatment options available (Sarang et al., 2009). Establishing harmony about how various each group perceives and interprets mental health can allow youth to freely express themselves while still staying connected to their families and communities.

Addresses the following factors related to negative mental health	Promotes the following factors related to positive mental health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✘ Cultural stigma related to mental health ✘ Racism and discrimination ✘ Loneliness and stress attributed to COVID-19 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Social support system ✓ Feeling safe ✓ Workplace and employment opportunities

IN-PERSON SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Based on community conversations and discussions with youth from Photovoice, it is clear that there is a lack of programs catered to older youth between the ages of 16-29 years old. This is especially challenging when you add a pandemic to the mix which has negatively impacted youth’s social connection and mental health. Thus, youth in this age group are eager to have in-person social activities dedicated to them where they can interact with their peers and form social connections in their community.

No-to-low-cost initiatives such as sports and other outdoor activities can address financial barriers whilst simultaneously providing youth with a space to connect with other youth and promote their mental well-being. One of our survey youth who identified as Asian/East Indian/Middle Eastern also suggested “free drop-in virtual/in-person counselling sessions, and subsidies for accessing counsellor on a regular basis.” This coincides with what was discussed in the post-Photovoice brainstorming session where

youth outlined a series of different programs that are no-to-low-cost and/or utilize existing resources in the community. Examples of activities that were listed by youth at the brainstorming session include:

- (1) after-school youth clubs at various schools,
- (2) art sessions (i.e., making slime, drawing, painting, photography),
- (3) outdoor meditation and mindfulness exercises in nature and,
- (4) sports.

Youth have also indicated that food is a motivational force when attending events and how food brings people of all walks of life together.

Community centres are also great resources for delivering mental health support and programs to tackle individuals' issues. In our survey, community centres were marked as one of the top mental health supports that youth access. Thus, community centres can provide individuals with resources, including counselling and social programs to reduce stress due to the COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown. Subsequently, community centres can also speak to the social determinates of mental health by undertaking concerns in food insecurity, housing, and unemployment.

Addresses the following factors related to negative mental health	Promotes the following factors related to positive mental health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✘ Loneliness and stress attributed to COVID-19 ✘ Lack of resources in the community ✘ Financial barrier to mental health supports ✘ Age restrictions to social and community programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Social support system ✓ Feeling safe ✓ Nature and outdoors ✓ Food

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – STEP-BY-STEP PLANNING PROCESS

1. Oct 6, 2020: Scoping Meeting with Community Partners

- Health Services Researcher facilitates a scoping meeting with Community Partners to discuss issues surrounding mental health in the community, the scope of the project and to gain interest

2. Oct-Nov 2020: Identify and Hire Youth Advisors for Youth Advisory Committee

- Health Services Researcher advertises for Youth Advisors to join the project committee and hires seven racialized youth between the ages of 18-35 years old to join the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC)
- YAC will support the design and planning of SPCO's participatory research project to explore racialized youth's perception of mental health and wellness

3. Nov-Dec 2020: Health Services Researcher Trains YAC in Research

- Health Services Researcher facilitated weekly meetings to discuss the motive of the project, the needed commitment and to train youth on:
 - how to conduct ethical research
 - research goal and objectives
 - target population
 - data collection methods
 - participant recruitment

4. End of Dec 2020: Finalizing Project Details

- Name of the project: YouVoice Ottawa
 - Double meaning: The 'You' in YouVoice signifies **Youth & You**
 - Allowing youth to use their voice to express themselves
- Deciding on a mixed-method approach
 - Photovoice and Survey as methods to collect data
- Target Population
 - Racialized youth between the ages of 16-24 years old

- Using Zoom platform to connect with youth
- Implementation timeline of the project from Jan-March 2021
- List of community organizations for Youth Advisors to reach out to recruit participants for the project (in **Table 2**)
- Creating social media pages to promote the project
 - Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/youvoiceottawa/>
 - Twitter: <https://twitter.com/OttawaYou>
- Referring participating youth to mental health resources: <https://www.mhcsukanya.com/>
- Setting up a designated email address for YAC for community outreach: YAC@spcottawa.on.ca
- Finalizing honorarium
 - \$25 Amazon E-Gift Cards for each Photovoice participant and for one survey participant

Table 3: List of Community Organizations for Outreach & Participant Recruitment

Organization
OCISO
Crossroads Children Mental Health Centre
CCI
Somerset West CHC
United Nations
IWSO
Somali Centre for Family Services
Chinese Family Services
Jewish Community Centre
Kind Space
Door Youth Ottawa
Youth Services Bureau
Ottawa Coalition of Community Houses
Britannia Woods
Adults School
Sex workers (individual)
Nan Hope
Turkish Community
Community Development Framework
The Centre for Resilience and Social Development (CRSD)
City of Ottawa

5. Jan 2021 (Before Project Launch Date): Assignment of Tasks Among YAC

- Creating promotional material to recruit participants

- Putting the survey on SurveyMonkey
- Managing social media pages
- Reaching out to community contacts about the project
- Creating consent forms
- Creating photo reflection forms
- Creating photo release forms
- Developing an outline and slides for each Photovoice session (4 sessions in total)

Table 4: Timeline and Tasks for the YouVoice Ottawa Project

YouVoice Project Timeline & Tasks		
TASKS	START DATE	DUE DATE
Running IG & Twitter Pages	Tuesday, December 22, 2020	----
Setting up a designated email address + honorarium for participating youth	Monday, January 4, 2021	Monday, January 11, 2021
Photovoice forms - consent form, photo reflection form, photo release form	Monday, January 11, 2021	Wednesday, January 20, 2021
Finalize promotional material	Monday, January 11, 2021	Friday, January 29, 2021
Reaching out to community orgs	Monday, January 18, 2021	Friday, February 12, 2021
Survey Period	Friday, January 22, 2021	Friday, March 5, 2021
Recruitment of youth for Photovoice via email, social media + our own networks	Friday, January 22, 2021	Friday, February 12, 2021
Photovoice Period with zoom meetings with participating youth to discuss photos and themes	Monday, February 8, 2021	Monday, March 8, 2021
Data analysis of survey and photovoice results	Wednesday, March 10, 2021	Friday, March 19, 2021
Data synthesis - Finalize Photovoice video and report for all of YouVoice results	Monday, March 22, 2021	Wednesday, April 7, 2021

APPENDIX B – PHOTOVOICE SESSION DETAILS

Session 1 (February 8th, 2021)

Introduction

The first session will be a short overview of the project, including project timeline, Photovoice concepts, how photos and group discussions will be used to establish and communicate a clear, meaningful message to inform action or change. Additionally, participating youth will have an opportunity to connect with other youth and ask questions.

The YAC will go through and be provided:

- Ethics and Consent Form
- Photo Reflection Form
- Photo Release Form

Participating youth will be introduced to framing question #1 (what does mental health look like for you?). During the week, youth will have an opportunity to explore and take photos to answer the question. Youth will also be provided with a photo reflection form to reflect on the photo they've taken.

Session 2 (February 16th, 2021)

Photography Workshop by Hot Shoe Productions & discussing Framing Question 1

A presentation by Hot Shoe Productions going through photography skills, photography etiquette (e.g., not taking photos of people in incriminating circumstances or without their permission) and how to use photography to tell a story.

After the workshop, the youth will get a chance to share their photos for framing question #1 and discuss them with the group. The photographer from Hot Shoe will provide tips and advice to participants during photo-sharing. Participants will delve into the narrative analysis process to discuss their photographs, identify important themes and determine the story behind their photos using the Photo Reflection Form as guidance.

Youth will submit their photos and reflections to the YAC email so that their photos can be shared on social media and for the final presentation tool.

The YAC will introduce framing question #2 (what makes you sad?). During the week, youth will have an opportunity to explore and take photos to answer the question. Youth will use their photo reflection form to reflect on their photo.

Session 3 (February 22nd, 2021)

Negative Mental Health & discussing Framing Question 2

The YAC will discuss with participating youth what it means to have poor or negative mental health and provide recommendations on how to improve mental health, such as building a support system and when to seek professional help. At the end of the session, the YAC will share mental health resources in the community via <https://www.mhcsukanya.com/>. This website contains a range of different mental health resources for youth, women, men, LGBTQ, newcomers, etc. The website was put together by one of the members of the YAC.

Participants will delve into the narrative analysis process to discuss their photographs from framing question #2, identify important themes and determine the story behind their photos using the Photo Reflection Form as guidance.

Youth will submit their photos and reflections to the YAC email so that their photos can be shared on social media and for the final presentation tool.

The YAC will introduce framing questions #3 (what makes you happy?) and #4 (what does your safe space look like?). During the week, youth will have an opportunity to explore and take photos to answer these two questions. Youth will use their photo reflection form to reflect on their photo.

Session 4 (March 1st)

Positive Mental Health & discussing Framing Questions 3 & 4

The YAC will discuss with participating youth what it means to have good or positive mental health and provide ways on how to promote positive mental health such as taking care of physical needs, eating

well, making time for social connections and engaging in physical activity. At the end of the session, the YAC will share mental health resources in the community via <https://www.mhcsukanya.com/>.

The youth will get a chance to share their photos from framing questions #3 and #4 and discuss them the group. Participants will delve into the narrative analysis process to discuss their photographs and identify important themes using the Photo Reflection Form as guidance.

Youth will submit their photos and reflections to the YAC email so that their photos can be shared on social media and for the final presentation tool.

After the Photovoice activities conclude, youth will be invited to attend an optional brainstorming session on March 8th, 2021, about how to communicate our results and inform action (more information [here](#)).

APPENDIX C - JOB POSTING FOR YOUTH ADVISORS



Participatory Research Project with Racialized Youth on Mental Wellness

Job Title: Youth Advisor

of Positions: 8

Job Overview: The Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO) is looking to hire Youth Advisors to support a participatory research project with racialized youth on mental wellness. The participatory research project flows from SPCCO's equity work and work with partners on mental health supports for racialized communities and priority neighbourhoods. Youth Advisors will be a part of a Youth Research Advisory Committee that will support the project's design and implementation. Youth Advisors will be paid for their role (\$20/hr), and all Youth Advisors will receive training on participatory research and employability skills.

Responsibilities and Duties:

- A commitment of 2hrs a week for 8 consecutive weeks (tentatively from Oct 19th-Dec 11th) plus 4 hrs per month from Jan – March 2021
- Recruiting of youth to participate in the research
- Creating appropriate research design and methods
- Potentially some collecting of data from participants
- Analyzing and interpreting the data

Qualifications:

- Racialized (i.e. persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour)
- 18-29 years old
- Interested in developing both soft skills (i.e. problem-solving) and technical skills (i.e. research design)
- Does NOT require prior research experience

We want to get this project going as soon as possible, so please contact **Nasra Hussein** at nasra@spcottawa.on.ca by **Friday, October 16th** with names and contact information, if interested.



Participants will receive
\$25 Amazon E-gift card



*YouVoice
Ottawa*

Social Planning
Council of Ottawa



Your Voice Makes a Difference... Communities Could Be Different!

- Are you a racialized youth between 16-24?
- Are you interested in building a supportive mental health system in your community?
- Have you experienced barriers accessing mental health support in your community?

Social Planning Council of Ottawa invites you to participate in the **YouVoice Project**.

Your voice will add a unique perspective and would help support racialized communities and priority neighbourhoods.

To participate, please email us at yac@spcottawa.on.ca

FOLLOW US





Participants will receive
\$25 Amazon E-gift card



**YouVoice
Ottawa**
Social Planning
Council of Ottawa



Your Voice Makes a Difference... Communities Could Be Different!

Join YouVoice Survey Project

- Are you a racialized youth between 16-24?
- Are you interested in building a supportive mental health system in your community?
- Have you experienced barriers accessing mental health support in your community?

Social Planning Council of Ottawa invites you to participate in the **YouVoice Project**.

Your voice will add a unique perspective and would help support racialized communities and priority neighbourhoods.

To participate, please email us at yac@spcottawa.on.ca

FOLLOW US



YouVoiceOttawa



@OttawaYou





Participants will receive \$25 Amazon E-gift card



YouVoice
Ottawa
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Council of Ottawa



Your Voice Makes a Difference... Communities Could Be Different!

Join the Youth Photovoice Project

- Are you a racialized youth between 16-24?
- Are you interested in building a supportive mental health system in your community?
- Do you enjoy taking photos?

Social Planning Council of Ottawa invites you to participate in the **YouVoice Project**.

Your voice will add a unique perspective and would help support racialized communities and priority neighbourhoods.

To participate, please email us at yac@spcottawa.on.ca

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A Catalyst for Sustainable Social and Economic Development Since 1928



EXPLORING MENTAL HEALTH
THROUGH THE LENS OF YOUTH

YOUVOICE OTTAWA'S PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Weekly sessions for BIPOC youth by BIPOC youth in Ottawa

**FEBRUARY 16TH, 22ND & MARCH 1ST
FROM 6 - 8 PM**

VIA ZOOM

Receive a \$25 Amazon E-Gift card +
Community Engagement Certificate upon completion

**FOR MORE INFORMATION & TO REGISTER,
CONTACT YAC@SPCOTTAWA.ON.CA**



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d'Ottawa



**YouVoice PROJECT: PHOTOVOICE
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

Photovoice is a part of the YouVoice Project, a racialized mental wellness initiative organized by The Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO). As a Photovoice participant, you will be using photographs, visual arts (drawings, paintings) and images online to tell your story about mental health and to educate and promote mental health awareness.

RIGHTS OF PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You can change your mind and stop participating at any time. You can also skip any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the project.

HONORARIUM

You will receive an honorarium of \$25 Amazon E-Gift Cards for your participation. Moreover, it may feel good to give your perspective and you may feel as though your thoughts and opinions on mental health support are being heard. Your input may inform the development of mental health services, programs and resources offered in Ottawa.

IN SIGNING THIS AGREEMENT, YOU AGREE TO:

- Share photographs, paintings, drawings and online images on our social media
- Participate in *Intro to Photovoice* and *Follow-Up Focus Group* sessions via Zoom
- To have your photos and/or recorded sessions used as promotional and furtherance of the Photovoice project

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

I have read the information about this project. My questions have been answered by the Youth Advisors and I agree to participate.

I, _____ [PLEASE PRINT NAME] agree to participate in this Photovoice project. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature of Participant: _____

Date: _____

If you are under the age of 18:

Printed name of parent or guardian: _____

Signature of parent or guardian: _____

Date: _____

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Project Coordinator, Nasra Hussein at the Social Planning Council of Ottawa at nasra@spcottawa.on.ca



APPENDIX F – PHOTO REFLECTION FORM

**INDIVIDUAL PHOTO REFLECTION:
YouVoice PROJECT**

This worksheet is a helpful tool for participants to gather their ideas before sharing their photos on Instagram and Twitter and for discussion among the group.

**Framing Question 1:
What does mental health look like for you?**

Brief description of photo:

I want to share this photo because...

What is important for people to understand about this photo?

**Framing Question 2:
What makes you happy?**

Brief description of photo:

I want to share this photo because...

What is important for people to understand about this photo?

**Framing Question 3:
What makes you sad?**

Brief description of photo:

I want to share this photo because...

What is important for people to understand about this photo?

Framing Question 4:
What does your safe space look like? (e.g., bedroom, school, community centre, etc.)?

Brief description of photo:

I want to share this photo because...

What is important for people to understand about this photo?

APPENDIX G – PHOTO RELEASE FORM

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of Ottawa



Le CONSEIL de
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d'Ottawa



PHOTO RELEASE FORM FOR NON-PARTICIPANTS

I am taking pictures for a project about racialized youth and their mental wellness in Ottawa, and I would like to photograph you. This project is by the Social Planning Council of Ottawa. It is your right to refuse or not to consent to have your picture taken.

By signing this you are:

- Providing me with consent to take your picture and possibly include the photo in the project
- Giving me your consent to have photos taken by me posted in a photo book or on online media
- Understand that there is a possibility that these pictures may be used publicly in a written report, presentation, research website or display
- Aware that the staff will take steps to protect my privacy and confidentiality of people in the photos at all times

Your Full Name (Please Print)

Date

Your Signature

Date

Photographer Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian Consent (applicable if individual is under 18 years old)

I am the parent or guardians of the minor named above and I consent the use of said photographs based on the contents of this release.

Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print)

Date

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

If you have any questions? Please contact Project Coordinator, Nasra Hussein at nasra@spcottawa.on.ca



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CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

Presented to:

JANE DOE

For your contribution and enthusiastic participation in the Photovoice project aimed at improving and advocating for the well-being of racialized youth in Ottawa.

Congratulations!

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF THE YOUVOICE OTTAWA ADVISORY COMMITTEE

NASRA HUSSEIN
Project Coordinator
