



Students Have Their Say: Relationships, Anxiety, Bullying, Screen Time and more

Summary of findings from the Tell Them From Me (TTFM) / OurSCHOOL Survey in Halton

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Our Kids Network

Our Kids Network is a Halton-wide partnership of organizations and agencies serving children and youth. Our work is focused on child development from birth to 18 years. Partners from education, government, health, mental health and special needs, police services, and the multicultural community provide the backbone structure that guides our vision, strategy, planning, and activities.

OKN is a national leader in mobilizing knowledge to strengthen communities and improve life for families and children. We have established the “Halton 7” – seven fundamental conditions of high quality of life – and we use them to measure the progress of our work. For more information about the Halton 7 Population Results, visit www.ourkidsnetwork.ca.

TTFM / OurSCHOOL Secondary School Survey

The Tell Them From Me / OurSCHOOL Secondary School Survey, developed and coordinated by the Learning Bar Inc., 2009, measures youth experiences at school and physical and mental wellbeing. Students in the Halton District School Board and the Halton Catholic District School Board were invited to participate. The survey is web-based and students complete it voluntarily and anonymously at school.

TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey includes topics such as bullying, peer relationships, wellbeing, and participation in activities outside of school. The results reported here are a high-level summary of the results for grades 9 to 12. We examine the results by grade, sex, and newcomer status.

This summary is intended as a conversation starter. It is one more piece of information to add to what you already know about children, youth, and families in Halton. We hope that it will provide insights on the wellbeing and experiences of our youth, and build awareness of the needs of youth in Halton.

These results complement other OKN research about children, youth, and families in Halton, including:

- The **Kindergarten Parent Survey (KPS)**, a Halton-designed survey of parents of kindergarten-aged children
- The **Halton Youth Parent Survey**, a Halton-designed survey of parents of grades 7 and 10 students
- The **TTFM / OurSCHOOL Elementary Student Survey Community Profile**

More information is available online at www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Our-Research



Survey Highlights

1

Connectedness and relationships matter. Strong relationships build strong youth. Research consistently shows a statistical relationship between quality of relationships and health and wellbeing. The majority of students report having more than one friend they can trust and that they get along well with others. Females are less likely to feel included in school activities and feel accepted at school compared to males.



Halton Region is a vibrant community located in Southern Ontario with nearly 550,000 residents and four municipalities – the City of Burlington and the towns of Halton Hills, Milton, and Oakville. Halton is one of the fastest growing communities in the province. Between 2006 and 2016, Halton's population increased by 25%, compared to an 11% increase overall in Ontario during this time period.

2

Canadian sedentary behaviour guidelines for children aged 12 to 17 (from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, 2012) recommend limiting recreational screen time to no more than two hours per day. Ninety percent of secondary students are spending two hours or more in front of a screen after school each day.



As Halton Region continues to grow, the population is also becoming more diverse. Nearly one in three Halton residents is an immigrant. In 2016, there were more than 20,000 newcomers living in Halton (those having immigrated to Canada in the last five years), an increase from about 13,000 newcomers in 2006.

3

One in four students shows signs of moderate to high anxiety. This percentage remains relatively stable across grades. The percentage of females with high to moderate anxiety is almost double that of males.



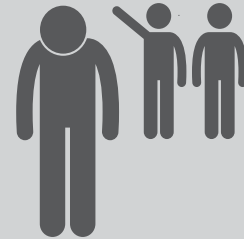
4

Most Halton secondary students are physically active. Sixty-five percent of students report engaging in 30 minutes or more of intense physical activity after school each day; however, after school physical activity slowly decreases as grade increases.



5

Bullying can lead to significant health, social, and emotional problems. Slightly more than one quarter of secondary students report being bullied in the past four weeks. The most common type of bullying is verbal, followed by social bullying and cyber-bullying. Physical bullying is the least commonly reported type of bullying experienced by secondary students.



As a result of the shifting demographic profile of Halton Region and growth in the newcomer population, this report highlights the experiences and wellbeing of immigrant students in Halton. This information can be used by community partners to better understand the needs of newcomer youth in Halton, and help make Halton a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive place for immigrant families.

Who Participated?

The 2015-16 TTFM / OurSCHOOL secondary student survey was completed by students in grades 7 to 12 at all eligible schools in Halton. The survey results in this report include grades 9 to 12, representing a total of 25 schools, and 17,481 students from the Halton Catholic District School Board and the Halton District School Board (see Table 1)¹. Grades 7 and 8 were excluded from the analyses due to differences in how the surveys were administered by school boards.

	Students	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	Total Students
Halton	Eligible	6,856	6,538	6,601	7,399	27,394
	Participated	5,394	4,633	4,068	3,386	17,481
	Response Rate	79%	71%	62%	46%	64%
Gender	Female (%)	2,625 (49)	2,263 (49)	2,005 (49)	1,641 (49)	8,534 (49)
	Male (%)	2,769 (51)	2,370 (51)	2,063 (51)	1,745 (51)	8,947 (51)
Municipality	Oakville	2,263	1,964	1,586	1,350	7,163
	Burlington	1,714	1,389	1,369	1,215	5,687
	Milton	829	830	659	582	2,900
	Halton Hills	588	450	454	239	1,731

¹ TTFM / OurSCHOOL secondary survey was completed by students in both school boards at various times between October 2015 and June 2016. The survey is voluntary and if students did not respond to the question, the missing responses were not included in the calculation of percentages.

The majority of students were born in Canada (76%), and speak English most often at home (74%). Sixteen percent of students were born elsewhere and have lived in Canada for five years or more, and 8% of students are newcomers who have been living in Canada for less than five years.

The TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey relies on self-reported information from students. Caution should be exercised when interpreting the meaning of the findings as they may not be representative of all students. Be cautious and do not over-interpret a small difference in a few percentage points

between categories, such as grade, males and females, and newcomer status.

The data in this report is from the TTFM / OurSCHOOL secondary school survey, which is separate and different from the elementary school survey conducted by the Learning Bar Inc., 2009. As such, the two reports should not be compared due to differences in survey item wording and response categories.

Unless otherwise noted, all differences described in this report are statistically significant.



Life in School

This section of the report examines the TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey findings on students' perceptions of their school experience, including their beliefs about learning and achievement, experience of safety at school, and bullying.

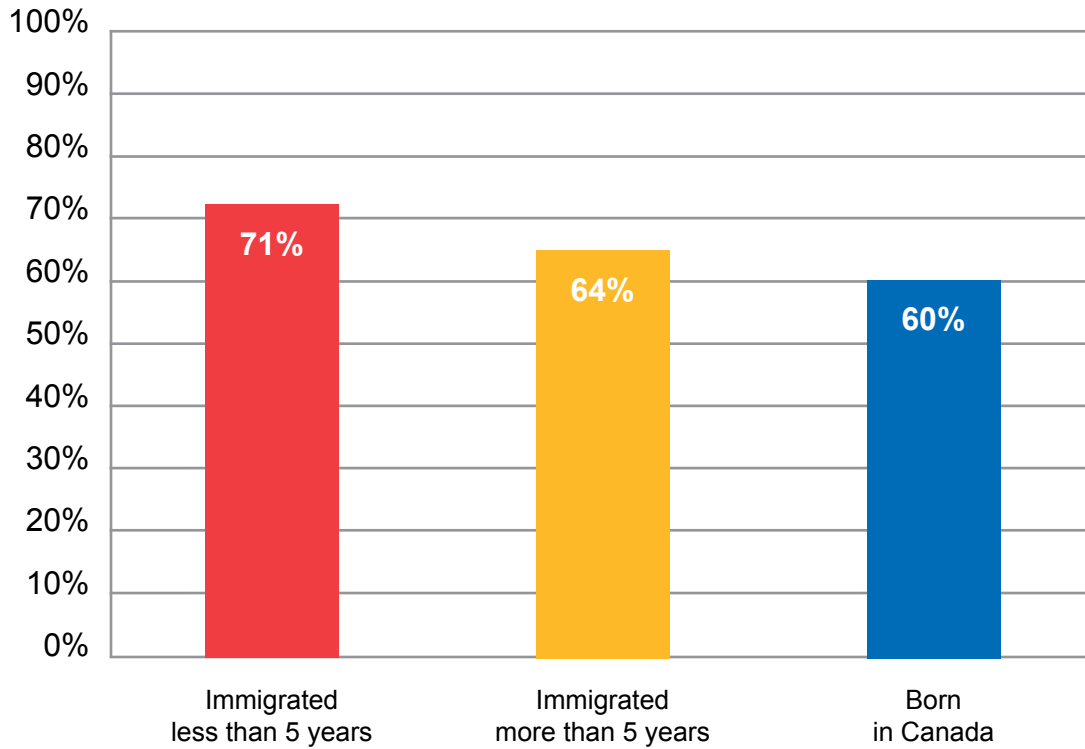


Beliefs about learning and achievement

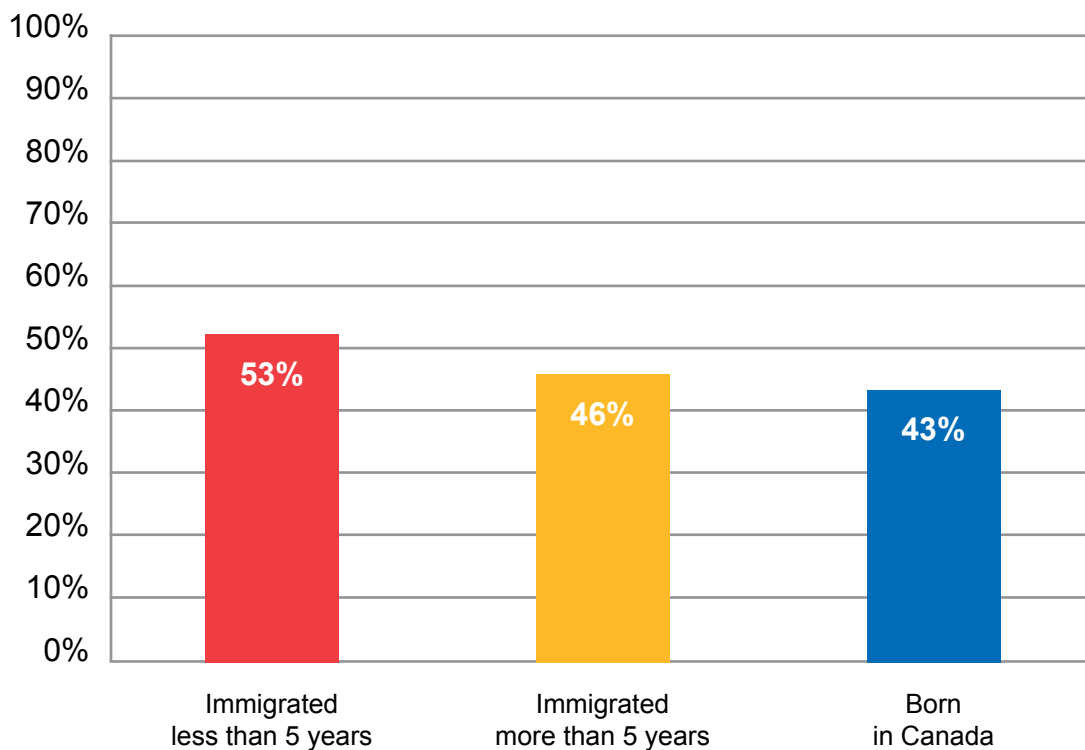
TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey asks students a number of questions about their beliefs related to school outcomes.

- The majority of secondary students (79%) agree or strongly agree that it is important to learn what is taught at school.
- This percentage decreases as grade increases, dropping from 84% in grade 9 to 75% in grade 12.
- Female students are more likely to agree or strongly agree that it is important to learn what is taught in school compared to males (81% vs. 76%, respectively).
- The percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that learning what is taught in school is important does not vary by newcomer or immigration status.
- Sixty-one percent of students agree or strongly agree that they are learning the skills needed for success later in life. Less than half of students agree or strongly agree that what they are learning in school is useful in everyday life (45%).
- The percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that they are learning the skills needed for success later in life decreases as grade increases, from 66% in grade 9, to 60% in grade 10, and falling to 57% in grades 11 and 12.
- Compared to students born in Canada and students who have immigrated to Canada five years ago or more, students who are newcomers (immigrated to Canada less than five years ago), are more likely to agree or strongly agree that:
 - They are learning the skills needed for success later in life.
 - What they learn in school is useful in everyday life.

79% of secondary students agree or strongly agree it is important to learn what is taught at school



Percentage of secondary students who agree/strongly agree they are learning the skills needed for success later in life by newcomer status (TTFM, 2015/16)



Percentage of secondary students who agree/strongly agree what they learn in school is useful in everyday life by newcomer status (TTFM, 2015/16)

School Safety

Students were asked whether they felt safe at school and whether they felt safe on their way to and from school. Students were also asked about fighting at school and whether they have ever stayed home due to safety concerns.

- In general, secondary students feel safe at school. The majority of students agree or strongly agree that they feel safe at school (75%), on their way to school (83%), and on their way home from school (82%). The findings remain consistent across grades and for both males and females.
- A small percentage of students (6%) report being in a physical fight at school in the past four weeks. This finding does not vary by grade.
- Males are more than three times as likely as females to have been in a physical fight at school in the past four weeks (10% versus 3%).
- Thirteen percent of students report that they have witnessed a fight on school property in the past four weeks in which someone got hurt, and 22% of students have heard a student threaten to hurt another student in the past four weeks.

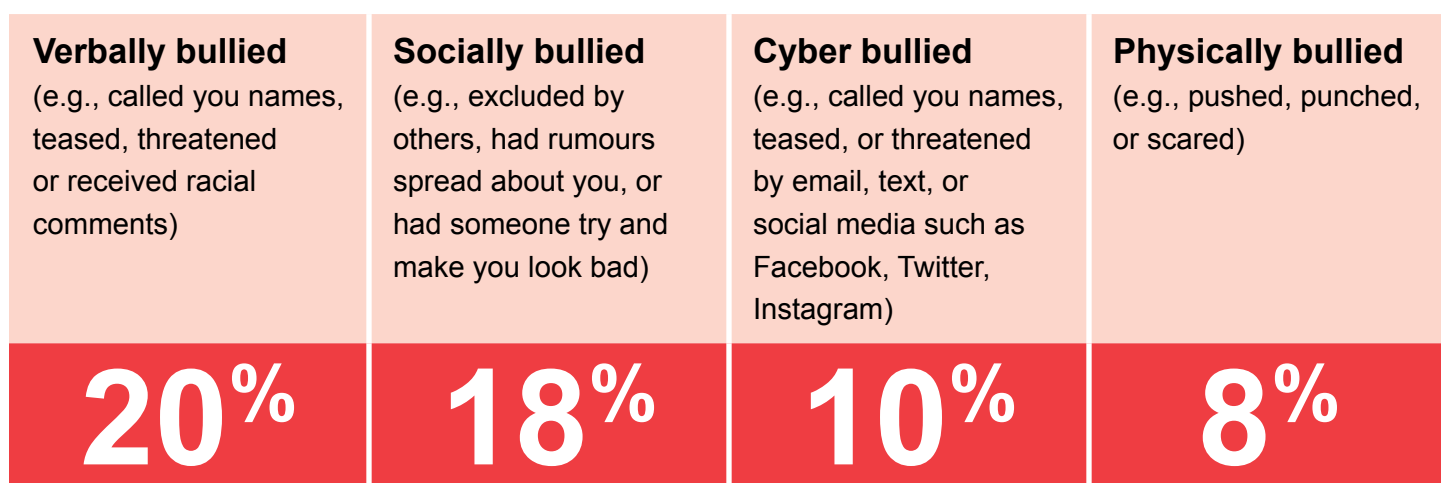


75%
of students
feel safe at school

Bullying

Bullying can lead to significant health and/or social-emotional problems. Secondary students are provided with the following explanation about bullying: Bullying is when a person tries to hurt another person and does it more than once. Bullying can be physical, verbal, or social, and can also take place over the internet with emails or text messages. The bully usually has power over the person being bullied, such as when the bully is bigger or more popular. Sometimes a group of students will bully others.

Students were asked: In the past four weeks, how often have you been:



- Just over one quarter of secondary students (27%) report being bullied in the past four weeks once a week or more. This finding does not vary by grade, sex, or newcomer or immigration status.
- The most commonly reported type of bullying is verbal bullying (20%), followed by social bullying (18%), cyber bullying (10%), and physical bullying (8%).
- Twice as many males as females reported experiencing physical bullying (11% vs. 5%). More males than females reported experiencing verbal bullying (23% vs. 18%). Slightly more females reported experiencing social bullying compared to males (19% vs. 17%). Cyber bullying does not vary by sex.

- Compared to students born in Canada or who have lived in Canada longer than five years, newcomer students are more likely to report experiencing cyber bullying (14% vs. 9%).
- Compared to students born in Canada or who have lived in Canada longer than five years, newcomer students are almost twice as likely to report experiencing physical bullying once a week or more (13% vs. 7%).

Successful bullying prevention includes the community and a focus on relationships. Research suggests that healthy relationships help decrease victimization, and help protect children and youth from the negative consequences associated with bullying (PREVNet, 2012). Asset-building in Halton is the foundation of meaningful relationships.

Learn more at: www.ourkidsnetwork.ca/Public/Building-Relationship

Relationships

Research shows that feelings of belongingness and stable, supportive relationships are critical for youth wellbeing and positive development. This section of the report describes the TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey findings on students' perceptions of their relationships at school, including their feelings of acceptance, belonging, and friendships with peers.

Belonging

The TTFM / OurSCHOOL secondary student survey asks students about the extent to which they feel a sense of belonging at school, including whether they feel included, get along with others, are able to make friends, and feel accepted. Results show that there are important differences among students, depending on sex and newcomer or immigration status.

- In general, secondary students feel that they get along with others – 79% of students agree or strongly agree that they get along well with others at school. However, feelings of acceptance and belonging are low among secondary students; this is particularly true for female students when compared to males. Compared to males, females are less likely to:
 - Feel included in school activities (62% for males vs. 55% for females)
 - Make friends easily at school (69% vs. 65%)
 - Feel accepted at school for who they are (71% vs. 59%)
 - Feel like school is a place where they belong (59% vs. 49%)
 - Feel accepted by other kids their age (73% vs. 62%)
- Students who were born elsewhere and have lived in Canada for at least five years have similar perceptions of belongingness as students born in Canada – there are no significant differences between the two. However, fewer newcomer

students (those who immigrated to Canada less than five years ago) agreed or strongly agreed with statements related to belongingness.

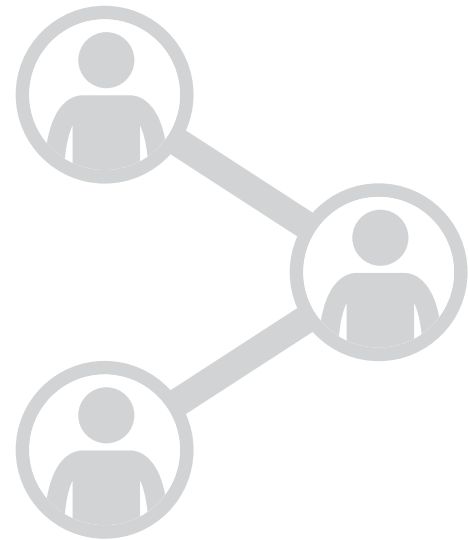
Friendships

Friendships are vital to a young person's wellbeing and development. TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey includes items that ask students about how many close friends they have, how often they talk to friends about their feelings, and how often they get along with others at school.

- When asked about the number of close friends they have at school, 70% of students report that they have more than one friend at school that they trust. Twenty one percent have only one close friend. Nine percent of students report having no close friends at school that they trust. These rates remain relatively stable across grades, except for in grade 12, where the percentage reporting that they have more than one close friend drops to 66%.
- Only 25% of students report that they talk to a friend at school about their feelings often. Females are more than twice as likely as males to talk to a friend at school about their feelings often (35% for females vs. 16% for males).
- Fewer newcomer students (those who immigrated to Canada less than five years ago) agreed or strongly agreed with statements related to friendships, compared to those born in Canada and those who have been in Canada for at least five years.

	Percent of secondary students who Agree/Strongly Agree		
	Immigrated less than 5 years	Immigrated more than 5 years	Born in Canada
Feel included in school activities	49%	59%	60%
Get along well with others	68%	80%	82%
Make friends easily at school	55%	68%	69%
School is a place where they belong	47%	55%	54%
Feel accepted by other kids their age	63%	69%	68%

70%
of secondary students
have more than one
friend at school they trust



	Percent of secondary students who Agree/Strongly Agree		
	Immigrated less than 5 years	Immigrated more than 5 years	Born in Canada
More than one close friend I can trust at school*	58%	69%	72%
Share private feelings with a friend at school often	22%	25%	26%
Get along very well with friends at school in the past 4 weeks	60%	65%	63%
Value friends opinions when making decisions	48%	53%	58%

* percent reporting yes

Health and Wellness

Physical Wellbeing

Screen time

Canadian sedentary behaviour guidelines for youth aged 12 to 17 from the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (2012) recommend limiting recreational screen time to no more than two hours per day. To calculate recreational screen time for students, we created a measure using the screen time guidelines that categorized the total amount of screen time from students' responses. We used these questions:

Two questions about how much time in minutes students spend after school each day using interactive communications technology (e.g., using a computer, tablet, or smartphone for email, gaming, and talking on the phone or texting)

One question about how much time in minutes students spend watching TV after school each day

- Ninety percent of secondary students are spending two hours or more in front of a screen after school each day.
- Males are more likely than females to exceed the recommended guideline of two hours (91% versus 89%, respectively).
- The number of students reporting more than two hours of screen time increases with grade, from 88% in grade 9 to 91% in grade 12.
- Compared to students born in Canada and students born elsewhere who have been in Canada for at least five years, newcomer students are less likely to exceed the recommended guidelines of two hours (91% for those born in Canada and 90% for those who have been in Canada for at least five years vs. 84% for newcomers). However, the majority of students are still exceeding two hours of screen time after school each day.

90% of secondary students are spending two hours or more in front of a screen after school each day

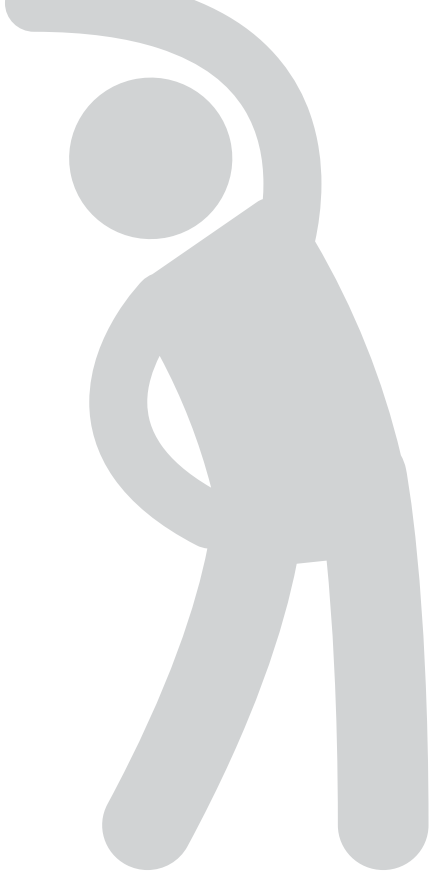
Physical Activity

Regular physical activity for youth is an important indicator of wellbeing and has numerous benefits that extend into adulthood. The TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey asks students how much time they spend after school each day doing physical activity that is moderate (e.g., walking, biking), and intense (e.g., activity that made them sweat or out of breath).

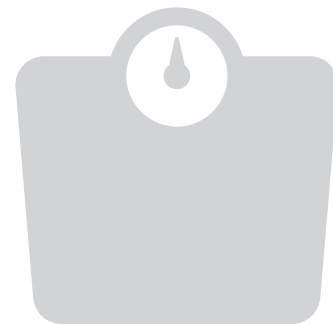
- Sixty-five percent of students report engaging in 30 minutes or more of intense physical activity after school each day.
- Males are more likely than females to engage in intense physical activity for 30 minutes or more after school each day (70% versus 60%, respectively).
- Physical activity slowly decreases with grade. Sixty-seven percent of students in grade 9 report engaging in intense physical activity for 30 minutes or more after school, compared to 66% in grade 10, 63% in grade 11, and 60% in grade 12.
- Rates of physical activity also differ by newcomer and immigration status. Sixty-six percent of students born in Canada report engaging in intense physical activity for 30 minutes or more, compared to 62% of students born elsewhere who have lived in Canada for five years or more, and 55% of newcomer students (those who have lived in Canada for less than five years).

Healthy Weights

Body mass index (BMI) is most commonly used to measure healthy weight. It should be noted that our measure of BMI uses self-reported height and weight, which tends to underestimate the actual percentage in the population (OSDUHS, 2015).



65% of secondary students are engaging in 30 minutes or more of intense physical activity after school each day



3% underweight
75% healthy weight
22% overweight or obese

Emotional Wellbeing



Anxiety

The anxiety measure in TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey is based on a series of survey items that assess a student's feelings of worry. The Learning Bar then calculates the percentage of students that show signs of moderate to high anxiety. It is important to note that the criteria used in these calculations are not equivalent to those used in clinical diagnoses. TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey uses a more liberal threshold for assignment into the moderate and high categories of anxiety. As such, high rates of anxiety as rated by these items should not be confused with high rates of clinical high rates of clinical anxiety in Halton students.

- One in four students shows signs of moderate to high anxiety. This percentage remains relatively stable across grades.
- The percentage of females showing signs of moderate to high anxiety is almost double that of males (33% vs. 17%).
- Rates of moderate to high anxiety also differ by newcomer and immigration status. Twenty-five percent of students born in Canada show signs of moderate to high anxiety, compared to 23% of students born elsewhere who have lived in Canada for five years or more, and 28% of newcomer students (those who have lived in Canada for less than five years).

1 in 4 secondary students show signs of moderate or high anxiety

Depression

The depression measure in TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey includes six items, such as “I feel sad or depressed” and “I cry without good reason.” Students rate how often they feel the way described in each of the six items and The Learning Bar then calculates the percentage of students that show signs of moderate or high depression.

- About one quarter of students (24%) show signs of moderate or high depression.
- The percentage of students showing signs of moderate or high depression steadily increases with grade, from 19% in grade 9 to 29% in grade 12.
- The percentage of females showing signs of moderate or high depression is almost double that of males (31% versus 17%).
- This finding does not vary by newcomer or immigration status.

Self-Esteem

The self-esteem measure in TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey includes seven items, such as “I feel good about myself” and “Overall, I have a lot to be proud of.” Students rate their level of agreement with each of the seven items and The Learning Bar then calculates the percentage of students who show signs of high self-esteem.

- Seventy-two percent of secondary students show signs of high self-esteem.
- The percentage of students showing signs of high self-esteem steadily decreases with grade, from 75% in grade 9 to 69% in grade 12.
- Females are less likely to show signs of high self-esteem compared to males (66% versus 77%).
- This finding does not vary by newcomer or immigration status.

Risky Behaviours

TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey asks secondary students to report on how often they engage in risky behaviours, including alcohol and drug use. This section of the report provides an examination of these behaviours by sex, grade, and immigration status.

Drinking

Students were asked how often they had one drink or more in the past four weeks.

- Slightly more than one quarter of students (26%) had at least one drink once a week or more.
- This percentage increases dramatically with grade, from just 12% in grade 9 to 43% in grade 12.
- Males are more likely than females to have one drink or more per week (29% versus 24%).
- Students born in Canada are more likely to drink once a week or more (27%), compared to students who are not born in Canada and who have lived here for five years or more (22%), and newcomer students who have lived in Canada for less than five years (20%).

Marijuana

Students were asked about their use of marijuana.

- One in four students has tried marijuana.
- Thirteen percent of students report being a current user of marijuana (occasionally uses or uses every day).
- The percentage of current users increases with grade, from just 6% in grade 9 to 22% in grade 12.
- Males are more likely than females to be current users of marijuana (15% versus 10%).
- The percentage of current users does not vary by newcomer or immigration status.

Other drug use

Students were asked about their use of drugs other than marijuana. Specifically, students were asked to indicate, yes or no, whether they had ever used six different drugs (ecstasy, crystal meth, glue/inhalants, heroin, cocaine, and steroid pills/shots).

- Thirteen percent of secondary students have used an illicit drug. Illicit drug use increases steadily with grade, from 8% in grade 9 to 19% in grade 12.
- Males are almost twice as likely as females to report ever using an illicit drug (16% versus 9%).
- Newcomer students are more likely to have used an illicit drug (16%), compared to students born in Canada (11%), and students not born in Canada who have lived in Canada for five years or more (14%).

Smoking

Students were asked whether they smoke cigarettes, cigars, cigarettos, or a pipe. The responses were categorized into current smokers (occasional smokers and those who smoke at least once every day) and non-smokers.

- Twenty-three percent of students have tried smoking.
- Nine percent of students report being a current smoker (occasionally smoke or smokes every day).
- The percentage of current smokers increases with grade, from 5% in grade 9 to 14% in grade 12.
- Males are more likely than females to be current smokers (11% versus 7%).
- Students born in Canada are less likely to be current smokers, compared to newcomer students who have lived in Canada for less than five years (8% versus 12%).



Do More with Data

The data from the TTFM / OurSCHOOL survey provide a snapshot of youth experiences in Halton. The next step is to share the findings from this report and have conversations about what the results mean and how we can work together in Halton to respond to these findings.

These guidelines for interpreting and using the data can help you put research into action in your work:

- Look for patterns of findings rather than focusing on a specific finding.
- While each indicator is important, using multiple indicators as evidence of strengths and needs provides a more comprehensive representation.
- Use caution when making comparisons. Look for at least a 5% change or difference between groups. This helps to avoid “over-interpreting” small differences as being important.

- Several types of response bias have been identified related to self-report surveys. Use caution when interpreting the meaning of findings because some data may not represent all children and youth in Halton.
- Data presented are meant to provide a snapshot of information about how children and youth are doing. The data cannot explain why an indicator is at a certain level.
- Bring groups of different community partners together to talk about and explore the data.
- Use the **Data Conversation Tool** to work as a team and explore the data further.

Explore Research (About the Data Portal) and Working Together (Early Years Initiative) for examples of how professionals relied on data in their work with children and families. For more information, visit www.ourkidsnetwork.ca.

Our Kids Network Protocol Partners

