



Centre for Sport Capacity

# 2021 **PORT HOPE** **YOUTH NEEDS PROJECT**

Conducted by Caroline Hummell  
Community Researchers/Brock University



COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS

## Community Improvement Research Program

Community Researchers is a nonprofit research organization that provides community-minded research students and graduates with opportunities to undertake important projects. This research project was part of the Summer 2021 Community Improvement Research Program. Nonprofits, charities, and other organizations submitted applications for projects which were reviewed by an independent panel of evaluators. Complimentary research projects were awarded to multiple applicants and studies were undertaken by research students and graduates, with support from their academic institutions. All researchers participated in a four-part training program developed by Community Researchers.



## Port Hope Youth Needs Project Overview

The following research project was enacted to gain an understanding of the current landscape of sport and recreation within Port Hope, ON. After an initial needs assessment meeting with key stakeholders from the Municipality of Port Hope, three main objectives were developed that this project aims to answer:

- Uncover gaps/barriers to participation for youth ages 12-18 in recreational programming within Port Hope
- Determine what trends youth highlight surrounding recreational programming generally (i.e., what they are currently interested in, what they want to see more of, etc.)
- Develop recommendations for making recreational programming more accessible and enticing to youth

## Research Methodology

<b>Type of research project</b>	Electronic survey and focus group
<b>Survey and focus group sampling method</b>	A survey distributed through targeted emails and social media sites
<b>Survey sample size</b>	44 respondents
<b>Focus group sample size</b>	5 participants (1 lead researcher, 1 Municipality of Port Hope stakeholder, 3 Port Hope Youth Action Committee members)
<b>Survey and focus group sampling period</b>	June through July 2021
<b>Lead researcher</b>	Caroline Hummell
<b>Supporting academic institution</b>	Centre for Sport Capacity Brock University
<b>Supporting faculty</b>	Dr. Corliss Bean



## Mixed-Method Approach



## Survey Key Highlights

### Demographic Information

- 73% of respondents were youth; the remaining 27% were parents/guardians answering the surveys on behalf of their child(ren)
  - 36% were between the ages 14-15
  - 50% identified as male
  - 86% reside directly in Port Hope
  - 43% attend Port Hope High School



### Port Hope Programming

- The majority of youth reported:
  - having participated in the youth drop-in programs and Port Hope skatepark (58% each)\*
  - their favourite program offered is the skatepark (39%)
  - their main reason for participating in Port Hope programs is to hang out with friends (38%)
  - having either participated in Port Hope program for 3-4 years or 5+ years (31% each)
  - lack of time or availability of programs/lack of awareness were the two most-selected responses for reasons why youth are not participating in Port Hope programs (46% each)\*
  - they have not participated in programs offered at the Youth Centre (85%)
  - having participated in programs outside of Port Hope in the last three years when compared to youth who have not (54%)

## Youth Wants/Needs

- The majority of youth indicated:
  - they are most interested in sport-related activities currently (50%)
  - they would like to see more drop-in programs offered (62%)
  - they prefer Port Hope programs to be delivered in-person (77%)
  - better activities offered would make them more likely to participate in Port Hope programs (58%)\*
  - they prefer programs to be offered during weekdays (i.e., Monday to Friday; 65%)
  - they prefer programs to be offered during the evening (50%)



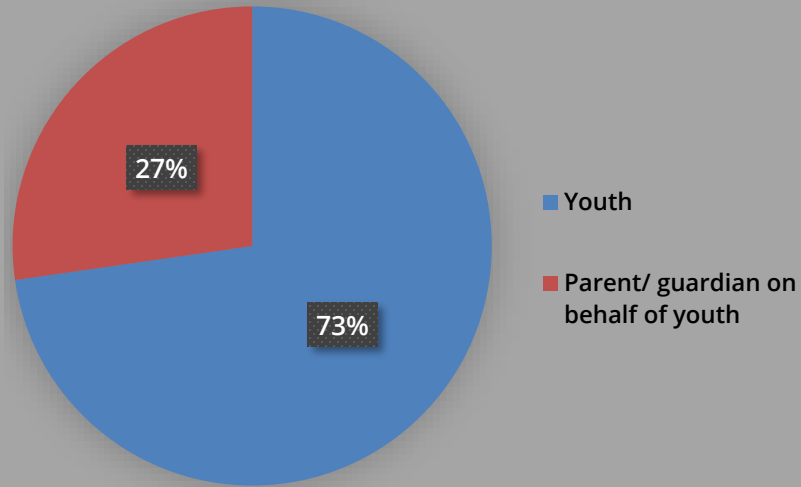
## Youth Communication Preferences

- The majority of youth reported:
  - they mainly hear about Port Hope programs through their parents (33%)
    - however, 0% prefer to hear about programs from their parents
  - they prefer hearing about Port Hope programs via the Port Hope website or social media (46%)
  - Instagram is their most used social media platform (92%)\*
  - Instagram is their favourite social media platform (38%)

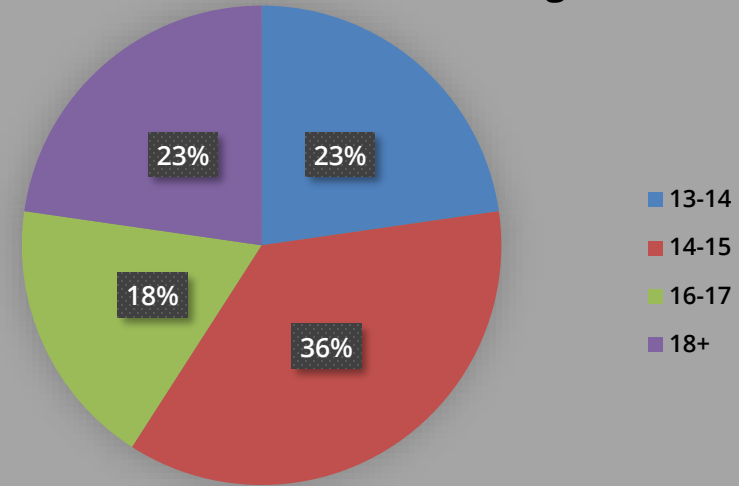
\* Please note that youth were allowed to select multiple choices for this question

## Survey Results: Demographic Information

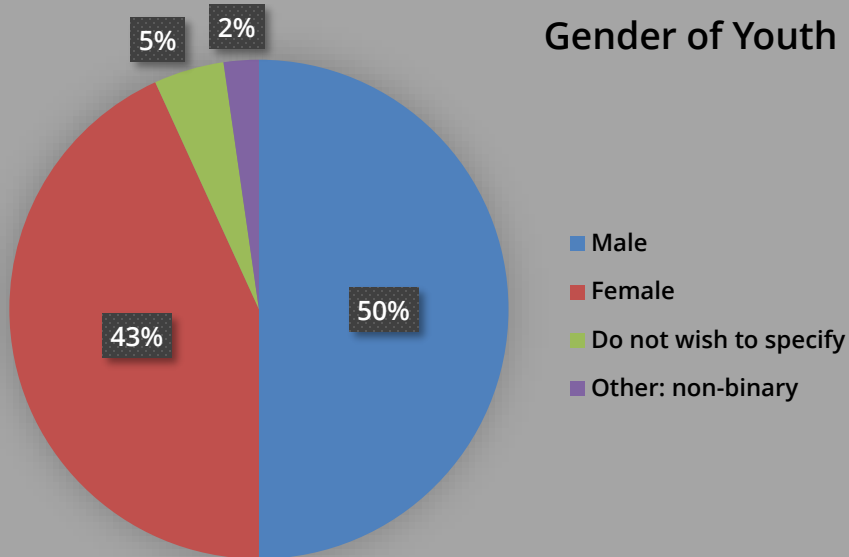
### Who Completed Survey



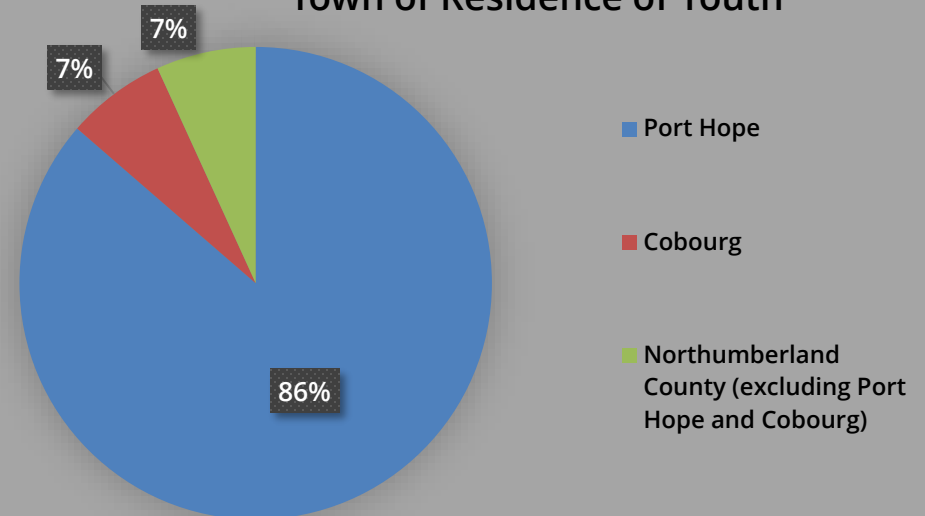
### Age of Youth



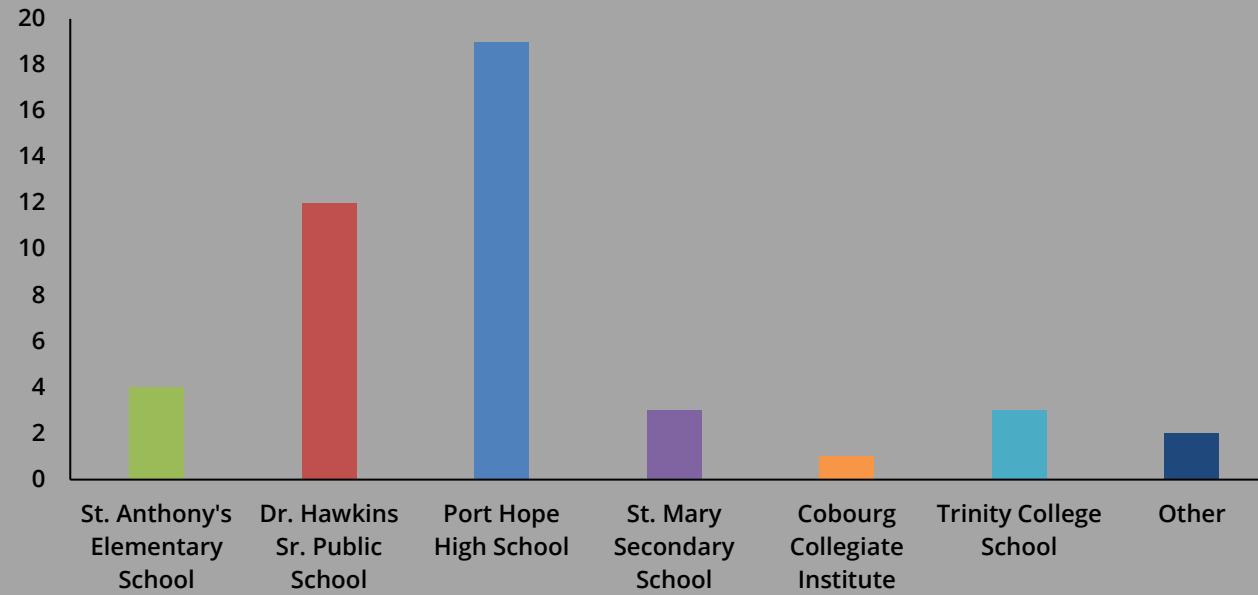
### Gender of Youth



### Town of Residence of Youth

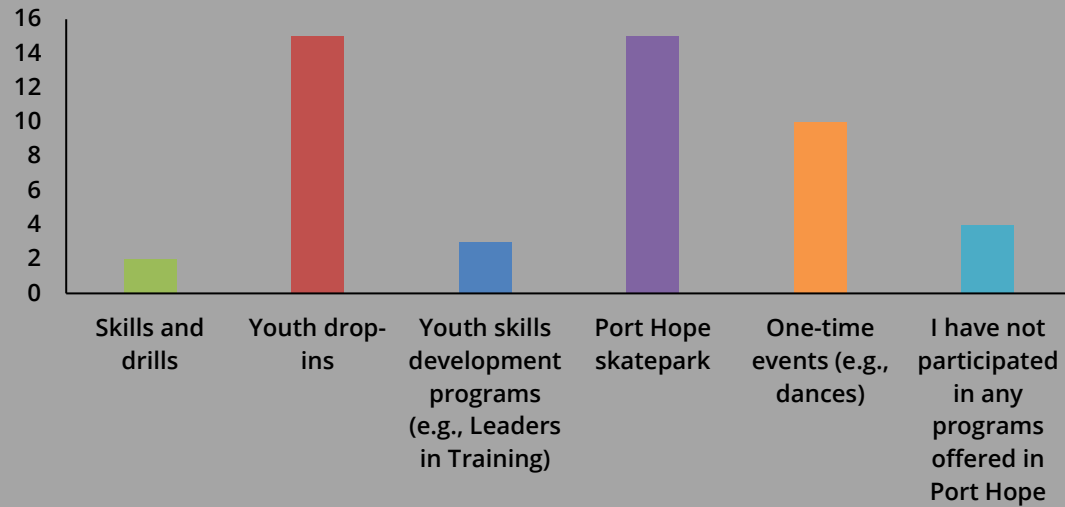


## School Youth Currently Attend

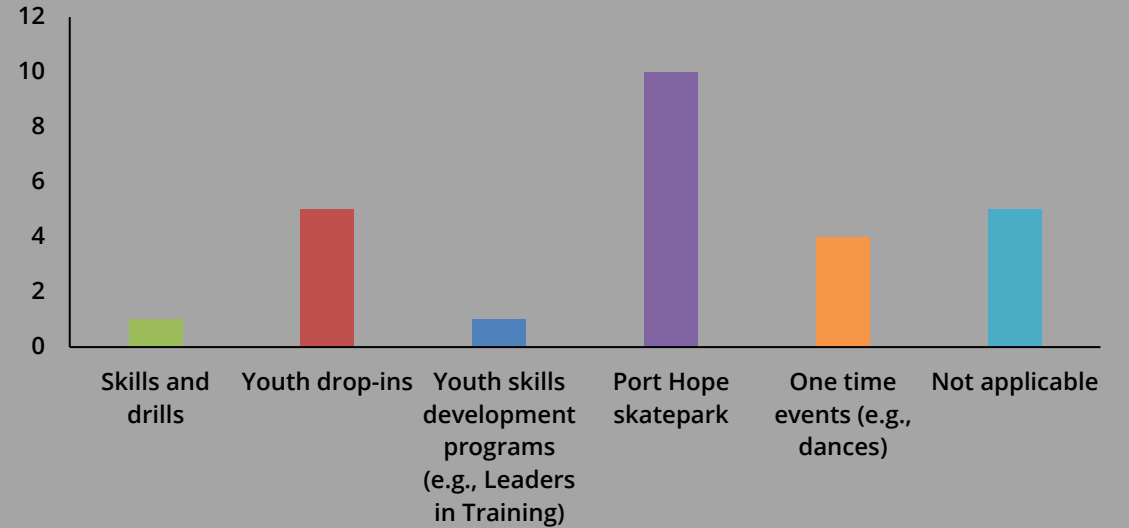


## Survey Results: Port Hope Programming

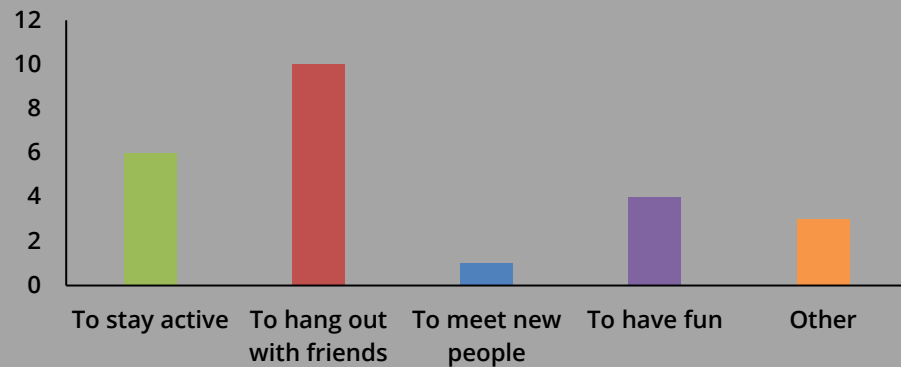
### Programs Youth have Participated In



### Favourite Program



### Main Reason for Participating in Programs

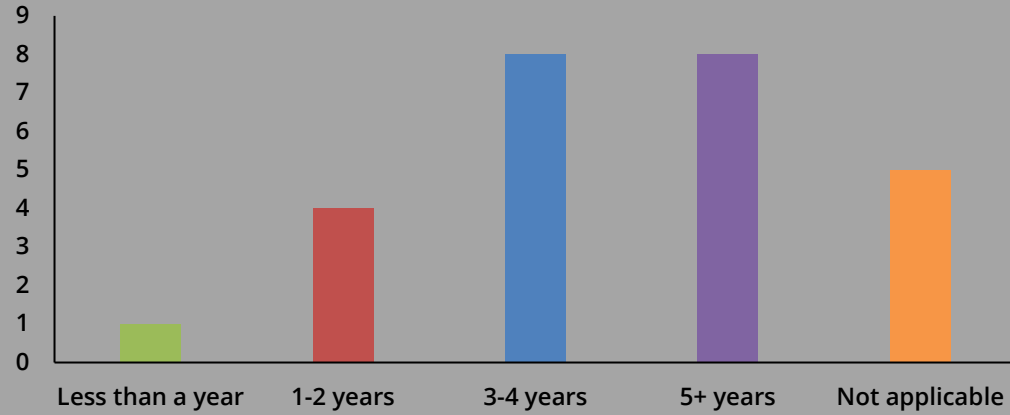


#### Responses provided for the "Other" option:

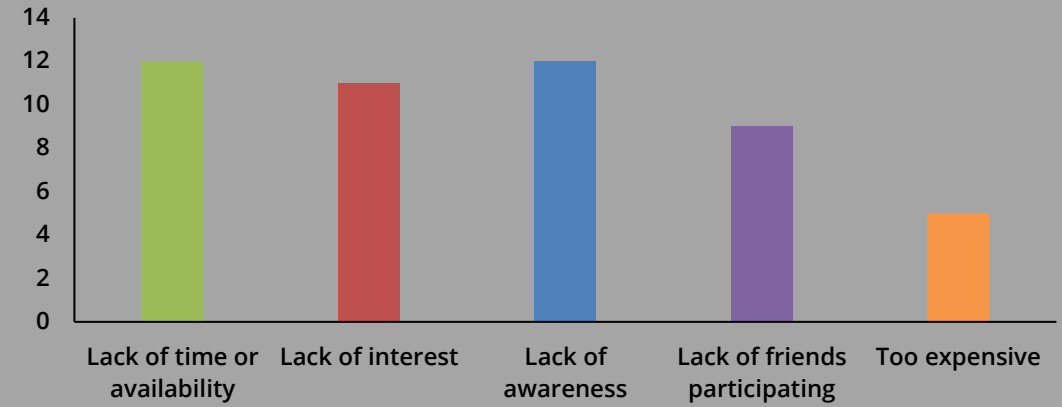
- To stay active, to hang out with friends, to meet new people, and to have fun (combination of all choices)
- Getting more comfortable around a lot of people, to stay active, to meet new people
- Explore creativity



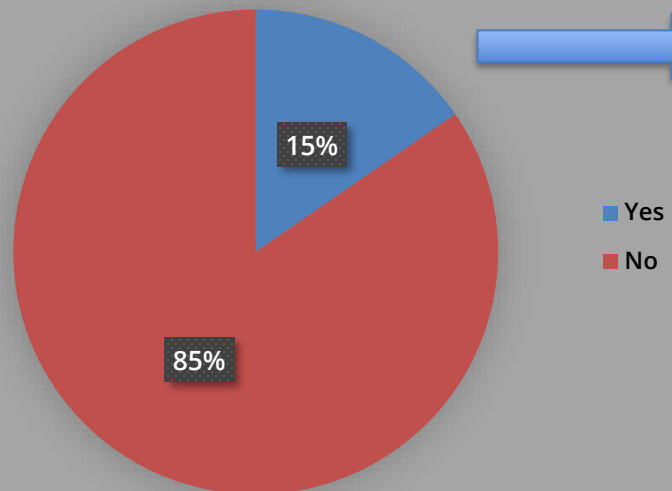
## Number of Years Participating in Programs



## Reasons for Not Participating in Programs



## Youth who have Participated in Programs at the Youth Centre



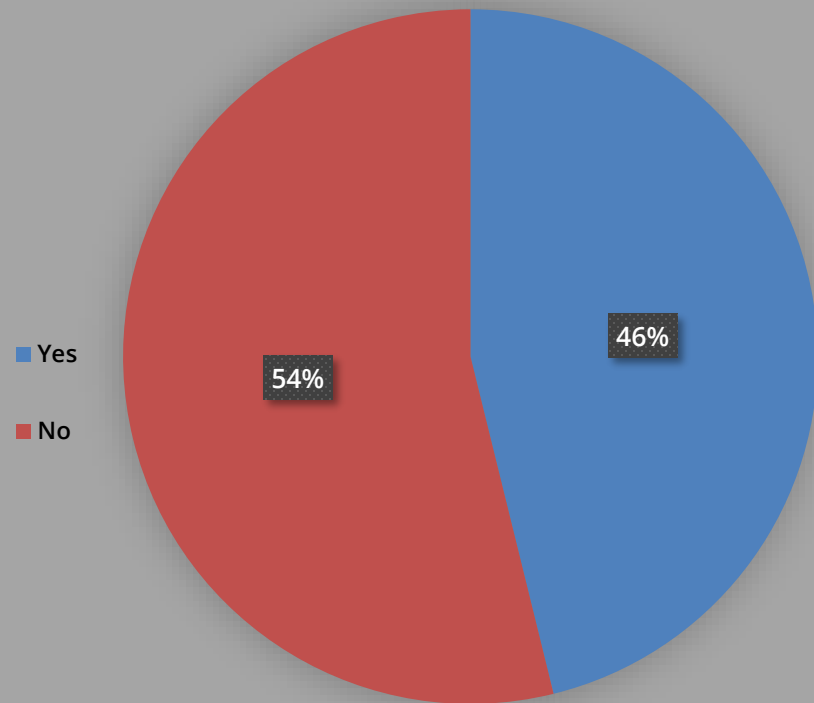
For respondents who answered "Yes", the specific programs they participated in at the Youth Centre include:

- Youth drop-ins
- Pool and foosball tables
- Basketball
- Badminton

For respondents who answered "No", reasons provided for why they don't use the Youth Centre include:

- Have not heard of it/never knew about it
- Don't know where it is
- Too far/have no transportation to get to it
- Lack of interest in the programs offered at it
- Prefer outdoor activities
- Friends don't go to it
- Cost of going

## Participation in Programs Outside of Port Hope in the Last Three Years



For respondents who answered "Yes", the following cities were listed:

- Cobourg
- Durham
- Ajax
- Belville
- Hastings

For respondents who answered "Yes", the following types of programs were listed:

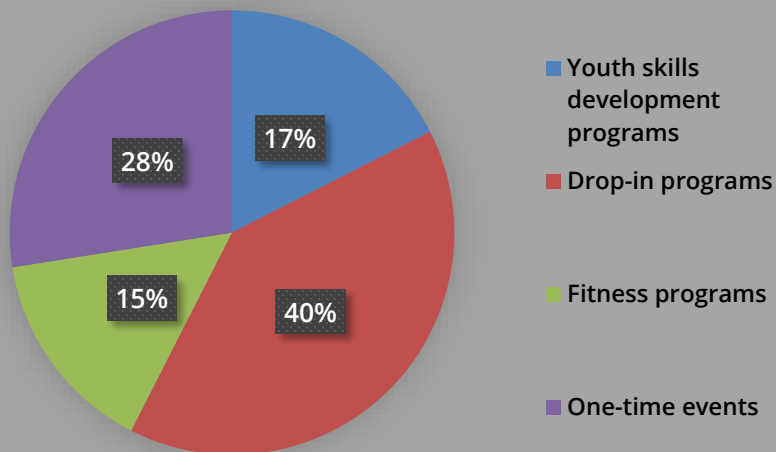
- Baseball
- Public skating
- Beach
- Gaming
- Lacrosse
- Aquatics/swimming
- Tennis
- Competitive dance
- Sword fighting

## Suggestions provided by respondents for improving Port Hope programming in the future:

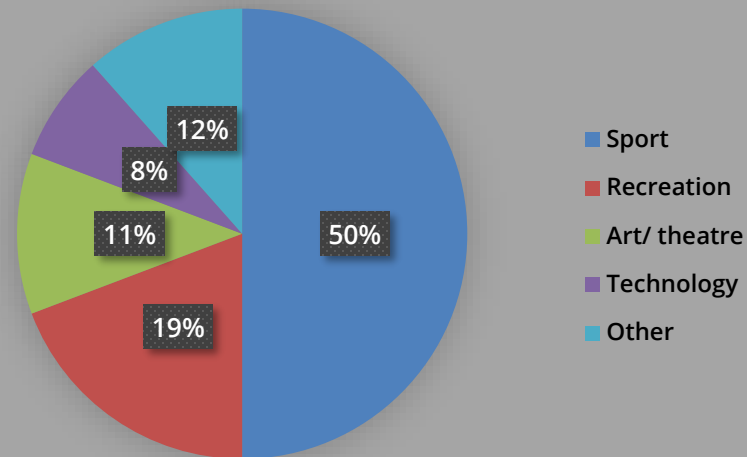
- Surveys to see what people want to do
- More people, good music
- Making a more concerted effort to advertise programming events where it would be more available to youth. Websites like Facebook and Instagram would be great ways to promote events
- Maybe make more options for people who don't necessarily want to play a sport. I would love to see programming for coding, arts, science, etc.
- Offer better times
- Build an outdoor public pool with a slide
- Mountain bike trails/jumps, skateboard competitions/contests
- Movie nights
- Skatepark special events
- Maybe a free one-time drop-in to see if it's something I would like to do, especially if it costs a fair bit of money
- More advertising
- Put more basketball areas around town
- Have weekly dances and other things that are every week so it becomes routinely available
- More diverse options. Seems to focus mainly on sports. Wish focus on arts, drama, etc.
- Open the pools
- More outdoor activities, like skating in the winter
- Take surveys of the youth you wish to acquire, as to what they may be interested in, rather than ideas from whomever they come from, as they're not usually up to date with current interests. Utilize social media platforms kids are using "these days" like TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram. Make it so it's not outside of the norm to participate in the Rec Centre's activities
- Run more youth centre programs at the Jack Burger to support kids on that side of the river. Not all kids can get to the Youth Centre easily
- Incorporate a more intricate activity system to keep everyone attentive and active
- Cost, variety, and advertising

# Survey Results: Youth Wants/Needs

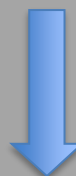
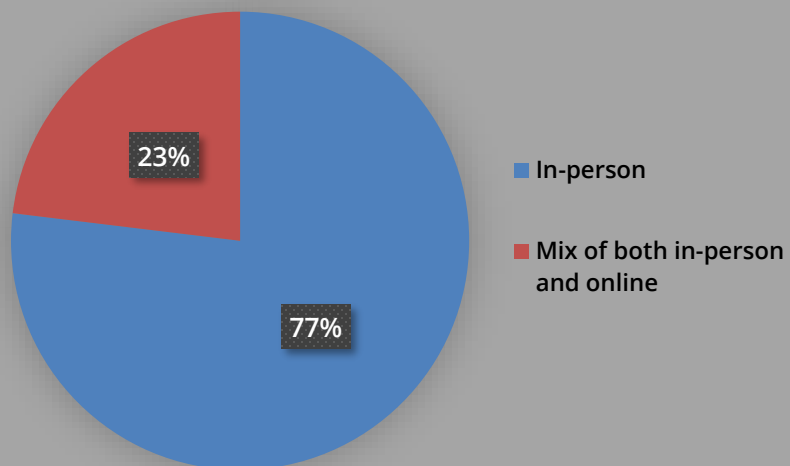
## Programs Youth Want to See More Of



## Areas Youth are Most Interested In



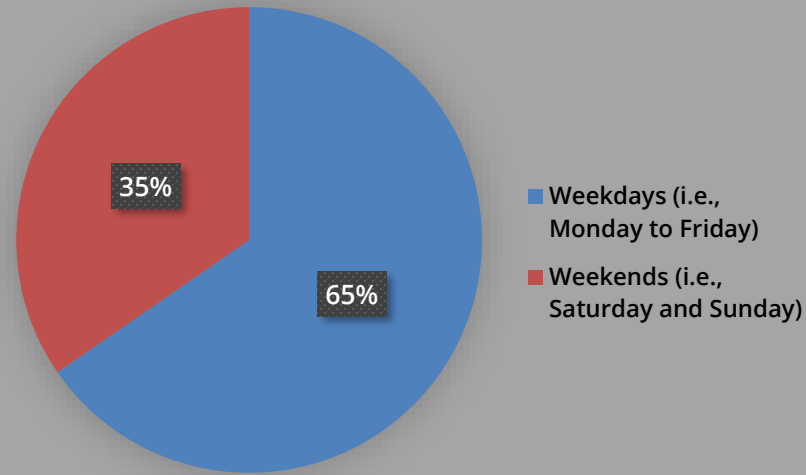
## Preferred Delivery of Programming



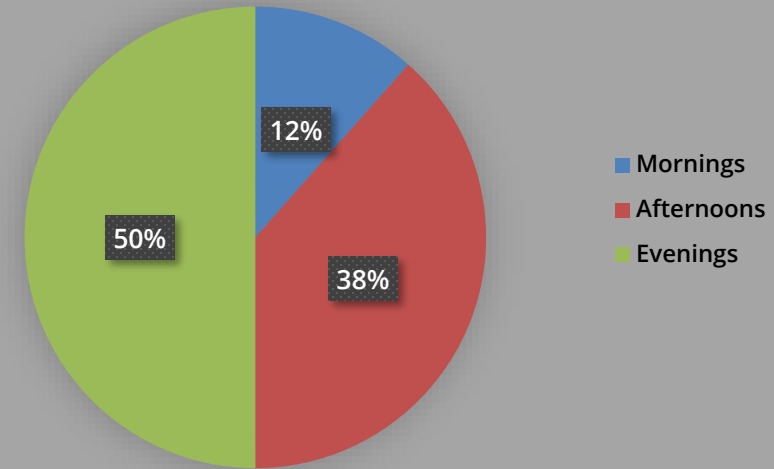
For respondents who selected "Other", responses included:

- Combination of sport and technology
- Combination of sport and art/theatre
- Academics

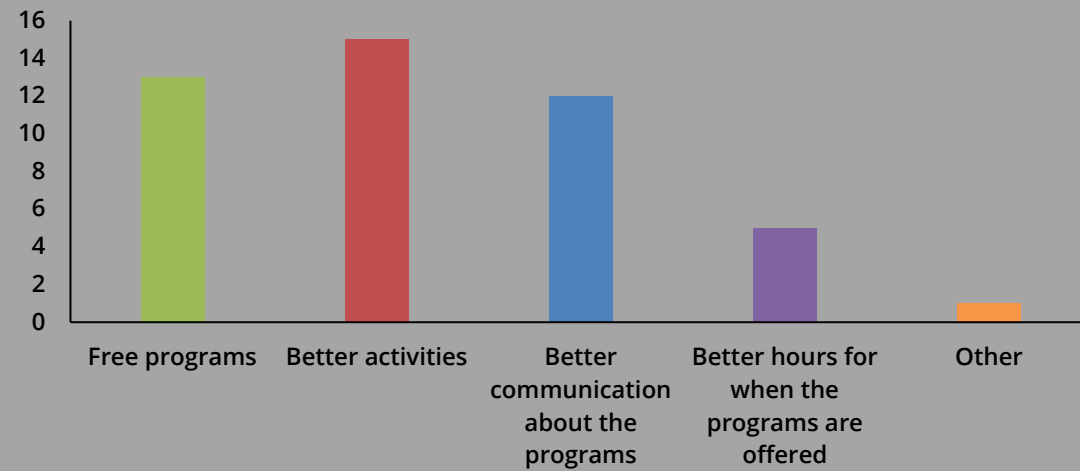
### Days of the Week Youth Prefer the Youth Centre to Offer Programs



### Time of the Day Youth Prefer the Youth Centre to Offer Programs



### Things that Would Make Youth More Likely to Participate in Programs

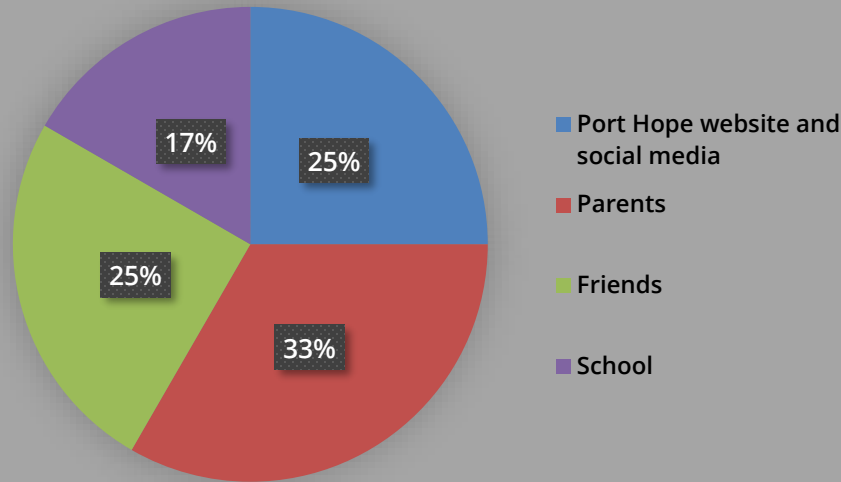


For the respondent who selected "Other", their response was:

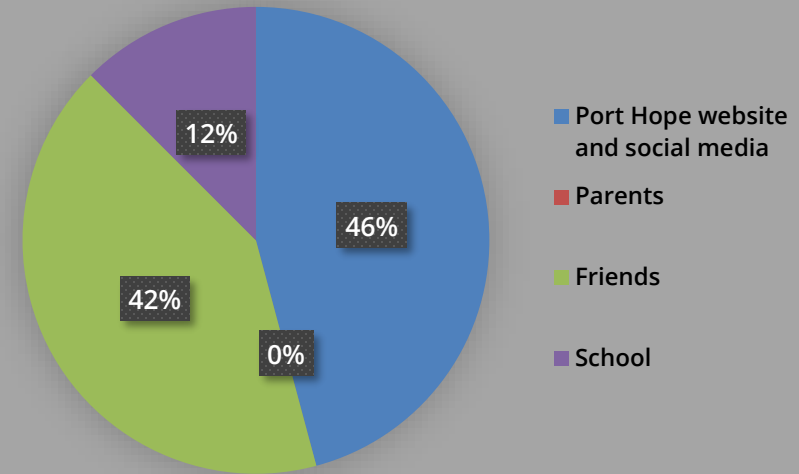
- Other locations than Town Park

## Survey Results: Youth Communication Preferences

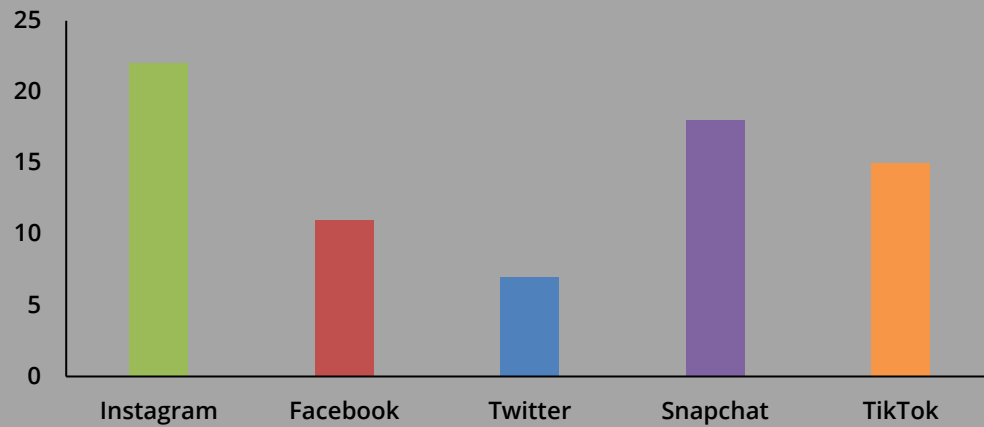
### How Youth Currently Hear about Programs Offered



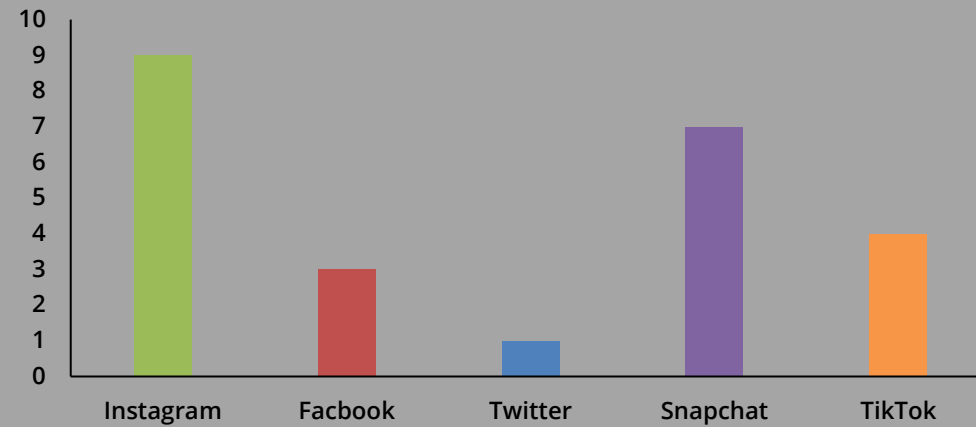
### How Youth Prefer to Hear about Programs Offered



### Social Media Platforms Used by Youth



### Favourite Social Media Platform to Use

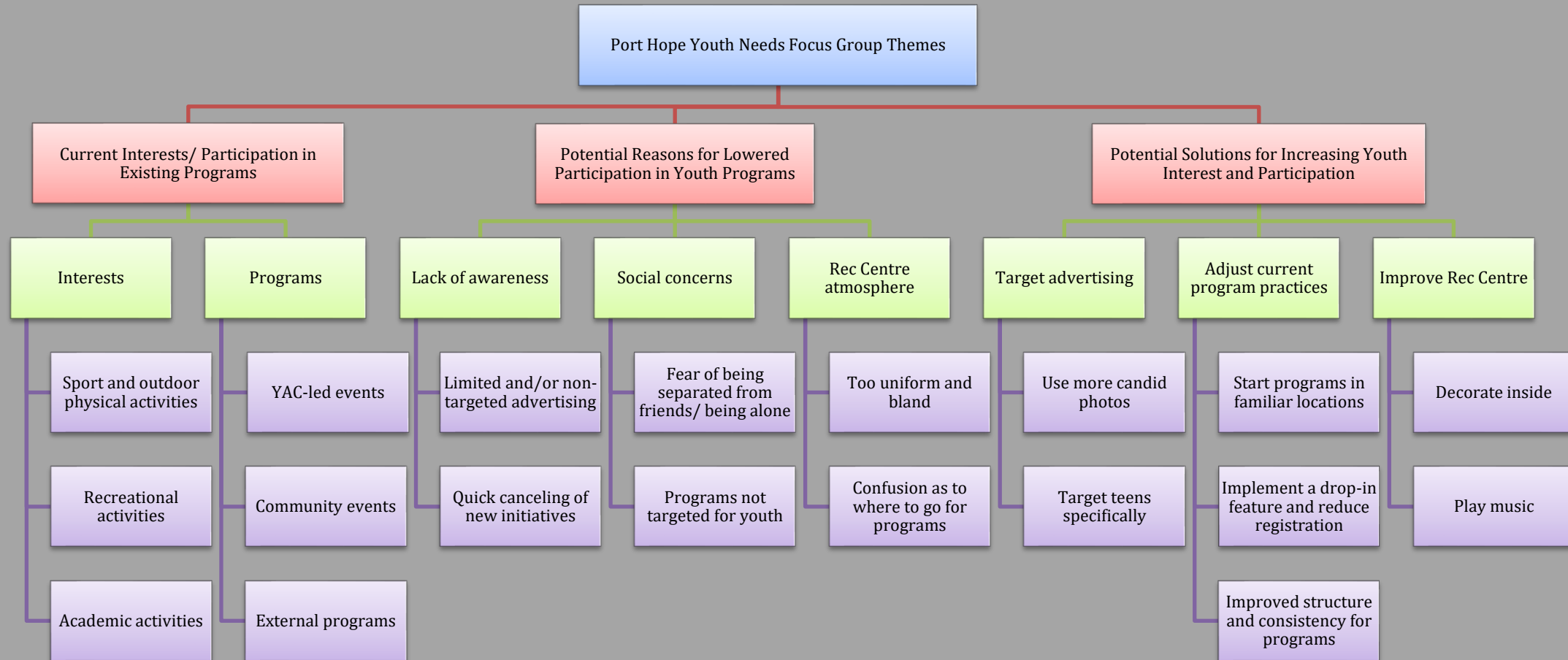


When asked to provide suggestions for improving communication about the programs, the following responses were provided:

- Maybe on Instagram
- Better website
- Making sure to give all event details (i.e., cost, time, address, etc.)
- There is pretty good communication about events, but less for groups that meet regularly
- More TikTok info
- More advertising through social media or print ads at municipal facilities- skatepark, memorial park, Port Hope High School
- Advertise more through the local schools
- More information about the activities from the school so my friends can hear about it and more of us may join
- Flyers
- If schools shared the info with parents and students
- TikTok
- Do Instagram polls, create a hashtag for the rec events, and challenge people to use it or share the post in their stories tagging you to boost outreach. Make a TikTok account to show how fun it is to go to the rec centre
- Email current member database
- “Happening Today” posts of social, weekly schedule, varied activities, more locations, and more time options
- Send out information on Instagram

## Focus Group Results

The figure below details the findings from the focus group. The focus group included three members from the Youth Action Committee (YAC) who are highly active in the community and provided commentary representing both their thoughts and the thoughts of their fellow peers. Using an inductive thematic approach, the focus group transcript was analyzed to generate themes from the data. These themes are further broken down into sub-themes where participants provided more detail and suggestions.





### 1. Current interests and participation in programs in Port Hope

#### A. In terms of current interests, activities spanning sport, recreation, and school domains were discussed.

- Examples included rugby, hiking, art, music, writing, and photography
- When asked what types of programs Port Hope should consider adding that don't already exist, suggestions included:
  - Study groups

*"I like studying in groups. I like to have someone I can talk to. Like, having study groups for grade 9s, 10, 11, 12, where you can go meet with people who are in the same situation, maybe taking the same course... I know for me, that'd be awesome because I like to talk when I'm studying and having someone who understands that sitting there I find so helpful."- Participant 3*

- Writing programs

*"I really enjoy writing. So, probably some type of writing program. It could... I don't know. Maybe writing prompts at the beginning of every program and then you can kind of see what you do and then discuss the next time or how to improve your stories. Or something like that? Discuss movies and books. So, kind of like a book club, but don't call it a book club."- Participant 1*

#### B. When looking at the current programs youth typically participate in within Port Hope, the most popular responses were:

- Youth Action Committee (YAC) events (e.g., themed dances and dinners)
- Community events that take place annually (e.g., Spooktacular, Float your Fanny, etc.)
- Programs either external to or not associated with the Municipality of Port Hope offerings
  - Youth orchestra
  - Elite-level sports leagues that require travel outside of the municipality

## 2. Potential reasons for lowered participation in Port Hope youth programs.

### A. Lack of awareness regarding what programs are offered and what they involve.

- Participants discussed how they felt the current advertisements and promotional material for the programs target the wrong audience.

*"I find the posters to cater either to really young children, like grades one through six, or they cater to adults. There's not like... I don't feel like they cater for the grade seven to 12, which is the group we're hoping to hit. It's either above or below. There's not that in between."- Participant 3*

- Participants also expressed concern over how the style of the advertisements may potentially be deterring participation.

*"If adults read the advertisements and then tell their kids and then show them the advertisement, they're probably going to be like, no, my mom told me about that. I don't want to go- that sounds boring."- Participant 1*

*"There's just no, or very little, creative aspect to it. So, then a lot of teens are very creative. So obviously, when we see them we're like, no, I don't like that. And don't even bother to read it."- Participant 1*

- Participants introduced the idea that they felt some programs were canceled before they were given a fair chance to attract interest, therefore preventing those who would've participated from coming out in subsequent weeks.

*"Sometimes it's like we don't get anybody, but if it's every week, maybe people were just really busy that week for some reason. Well, it's canceled next week, because we didn't get anybody last week."- Participant 3*

## B. Youth being fearful of social stigma/ concerns associated with participating in Port Hope programs.

- Participants elaborated on how their peers tend to avoid situations where they feel like they will either be separated from their friends or where they will have to “put themselves out there”. Due to this unfamiliarity and discomfort, the youth believe this to be a major contributing factor as to why participation in some of the more unique programs and events (e.g., 50’s-themed dinner) is low.

*“I think part of it might be it’s different social groups than what they’re used to. They like to stick to their social group. It’s the fear of going and not having that same group or maybe the friend can’t make it so they don’t want to go alone and try and make friends at these events.”- Participant 3*

- Participants also noted how a lot of the programs offered are not catered specifically to the teenage group. Additionally, some programs involve other age groups, such as younger children, which can prevent teens from wanting to participate.

*“They’re more directed towards different age groups. Like, they’re, like, really young kids, or, like, really old people. Like, there’s not a really in-between for us, I don’t think.”- Participant 1*

*“As we got older, there were more younger kids from Hopkins, which was the school attached to the high school. And you can just tell, like, you can just tell the maturity differences. And it got a little bit harder to go and enjoy it just because they’re really loud.”- Participant 2*

## C. The atmosphere and environment of the Rec Centre are lacking.

- Participants commented on how certain aspects of the Rec Centre may need to be improved to boost participation. Issues they have with the centre currently are:
  - It is too uniform and bland

*“I’m not always like the biggest fan of the atmosphere at the Rec Centre. I feel like that sounds terrible, but I don’t know what it is. I just feel like it’s so structured. It’s way too structured in there for me. It just feels so like... a little bit like governmenty in there.”- Participant 2*

*“The times I’ve been in there just feel like there’s a lack of color and energy.”- Participant 3*

- It can be confusing figuring out where to go for a program once inside

*"I think the other thing with the Rec Centre is not everyone always knows where they're supposed to go or what rooms to go in. I know my first few times, I wasn't sure what rooms we were supposed to go in or not be in or where the specific rooms are. If I was in activity room B, I didn't know exactly where that was. So, they're timid going into it already because they don't know where they're going."- Participant 1*

### 3. Potential solutions for increasing youth interest and participation in Port Hope youth programs.

#### A. Utilize more targeted advertising for teens specifically.

- Participants suggested making the advertisements more personable and creative by using different colours, designs, and candid photos versus stock image photos.

*"Obviously, they need to be structured, but just a little bit less because when there's too much, it's boring. Like, when you're doing a PowerPoint, you want to have some fun things going on and not too many textboxes or something like that. But also, if we use more photos taken and just candid."- Participant 1*

#### B. Adjust current program practices to strategically recruit more youth participants.

- First, Participants suggested offering programs to youth in familiar locations. Make note of where teens prefer to gather and plan events and programs that can be run in those specific locations (e.g., the skatepark or the schools). They believe that by bringing the programs TO the youth, they may feel more comfortable participating because they'll be in a familiar setting. Due to this, they hope it may encourage them to start seeking out programs inside of the REC Centre as well.

*"Something else that might help with getting people to the rec is starting outside. Like, start with outdoor activities. There's basketball courts, tennis courts, soccer field... start with activities like that. I know a lot of people my age will go out and just play pickup basketball. So, start with something like that outside of the rec to just draw them to that area and then work on getting them into the rec Centre"- Participant 2*

- Second, participants suggested reducing the need for registration for certain programs and to consider implementing a drop-in feature. They believe that if youth simply get the chance to participate and try out a program, it may boost participation rates.

*“At the same time, not have to register your first time or something. Like, you could just show up or just drop in for your first time. Like, you can just bring a friend with you.”- Participant 2*

- Third, participants suggested making the programs more structured and consistent so they're not left guessing when and where a program is or isn't running.

*“I really like routines. So, if it was organized on the same day every week or something at the same time, I would like that.”- Participant 1*

### **C. Make improvements to the Rec Centre to make it more welcoming and youth-friendly.**

- Participants suggested livening the Rec Centre up by decorating its interiors (e.g., adding pictures to the walls) and playing light music in the background. By making the Rec Centre more welcoming, they believe this may entice more youth to want to come inside and check it out.

*“I feel like if there was an event to make it decorated by teens or something, and it was redone every few years, I feel like that could liven it up and make it more of a space where we want to be because we feel more like welcomed.”- Participant 1*

*“Maybe just try and have a speaker playing really lowly at the front desk. So, as you come in, you're not hit with the dead silence. But each room can have that silence if they want it, or if they so choose, they could put music on.” Participant 3*

## Recommendations

After reviewing the results of both the surveys and the focus group, the following recommendations are provided:

1. Consider providing more recreational programs that incorporate non-sport activities. For instance, art programs were highlighted as an example by the youth. By having a variety of programs offered, it might appeal to more youth, therefore increasing participation rates.
2. To increase participation in the Rec/Youth Centre specifically, attempt to initiate programs in familiar and popular locations (e.g., the skatepark and schools) before transitioning them into the centre. The concept of “starting outside to work your way inside” may prove to be successful if youth get a chance to try out a program where they are most comfortable.
3. To also increase participation in the Rec/Youth Centre, consider decorating its interior and promoting a more inclusive and welcoming atmosphere for youth. If permissible, consider hanging pictures, playing music, and re-painting certain areas to entice more youth to venture inside.
4. Consider implementing more drop-in programs at little to no cost. Youth may be more incentivized to try a program out if the barriers of registration and cost are removed.
5. Promote programs and events using social media platforms more frequently. Through consistent posting and advertising via popular platforms like Instagram and TikTok, the social media algorithm will increase the chances of youth seeing the content. Furthermore, by encouraging youth to like, share, and save posts, reach will automatically expand to a larger audience.