

PLANET  
Youth®

PARTNER Calgary



A UNITED WAY OF CALGARY  
AND AREA INITIATIVE

# Planet Youth Calgary

## A COMMUNITY-DRIVEN APPROACH TO YOUTH WELL-BEING

Calgary's youth are growing up in a fast-changing world, and many families are feeling the pressure:

- Alberta's youth are hospitalized for substance-related concerns at a higher rate than the national average<sup>1</sup>.

## NOW IS THE TIME TO COME TOGETHER AND SUPPORT OUR YOUTH.

**Planet Youth Calgary**, an initiative of United Way of Calgary and Area, is dedicated to promoting the mental health and well-being of young people by reducing substance use and addressing the risk factors that affect their lives. Originating from the proven Icelandic Prevention Model, successful for over 25 years and adopted worldwide, Planet Youth strengthens protective factors across families, peer groups, schools, and recreational spaces. Through community collaboration, the initiative fosters healthier environments for young people, focusing on sustainable, long-term change.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/alcohol-cannabis-youth-cihi-report-1.52929841>

Join Planet Youth Calgary in the community closest to you!

Visit:

[planetyouthcalgary.ca](http://planetyouthcalgary.ca)

[@PlanetYouthCalgary](#) (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn)

## BUILDING HEALTHIER FUTURES TOGETHER

Planet Youth Calgary is designed to reflect our city's unique culture, diversity, communities and strengths.

When youth feel heard, included, and supported, they thrive—and so do our communities.

With our delivery partners, Miskanawah Community Services Association, Trellis Society and YMCA, we work in **four priority communities** in Calgary. Each priority community has a community coalition and a youth council, with a strong focus on data review and community action planning while also providing opportunities for members to lead, participate in, and volunteer for recurring and special workshops, activities, and events.



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# Planet Youth Calgary Data Overview 2024-2025

## CITY WIDE DATA

### ENGAGEMENT & REACH

- **Over 1,000 youth** were engaged through surveys, youth conversations, and focus groups.
- **Nearly 40 organizations** collaborated in recruitment and delivery, showing strong community collaboration.

### KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

- **Wellbeing:** Most youth rated their physical health positively, though adequate sleep was less common, especially for females. Males generally reported better mental health, while females described lower energy and calmness.
- **Family Dynamics:** Home was largely a safe and supportive space, with most youth experiencing warmth from parents. Many reported strong monitoring and rules around when they should be home at night, and parental disapproval of substance use was widespread.
- **Peers:** Peer pressure was generally low, though some youth had friends who vaped or used cannabis. Females were more likely to feel influence around skipping class or smoking.
- **School:** Most felt safe at school and had a sense of belonging, though a few struggled in receiving care. Academic confidence was high, but enjoyment of schoolwork was mixed.
- **Leisure & Recreation:** Physical activity levels were strong, with many youth involved in sports, volunteering, or the arts (especially females). Still, a significant portion reported staying out past midnight.
- **Community:** Many held positive views of their community and felt safe, though fewer expected to stay long-term. Reports of vandalism were modest, and about half described having a strong social life.
- **Substance Use:** Alcohol was the most commonly tried substance, followed by vaping, cannabis, and cigarettes, though recent use was much lower. Daily energy drink consumption was notably high.

### RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- **City-Wide Risk Factors:** Low wellbeing, weak family support/monitoring, peer pressure, friends who use substances, unsafe or disconnected schools, unstructured leisure time, and unsafe communities were often linked to 2–3× higher substance use across multiple substances.
- **City-Wide Protective Factors:** Safe and caring homes, strong parental oversight and rules, disapproval of substance use, positive peers, safe and connected schools, good grades, structured activities, and safe communities were associated with 25–50% lower use across multiple substances.

### YOUTH VOICES (CONVERSATIONS & FOCUS GROUPS)

- Youth spoke about struggling with sleep and self-care, even while knowing it is important.
- They described gender double standards: boys were pressured to hide emotions, while girls were judged for how they looked or behaved, restricted in their freedom, and often felt dismissed.
- Youth reported mixed experiences of safety and belonging in schools and communities: while connection was seen as important, many felt unsafe in unfamiliar places, disconnected at school, and excluded in new environments.
- Families are valued but often experienced as emotionally distant.
- Friends are an important source of support, but can also contribute to stress, peer pressure, or risky behaviours.
- Social media harms self-image, while technology is seen as both addictive and useful.
- Cultural stigma, generational gaps, and a lack of inclusive supports are key barriers.
- Youth expressed a desire for safe, stigma-free, community-based, and culturally responsive supports.