# YOUTH GRAVITY

# IMPACT THE OUTCOME

## YOUTH VOICE REPORT

## 2021

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## I. INTRODUCTION

# FOUNDER'S NOTE

### Sal Sabila
**Founder & CEO**

In 2016, I founded Youth Gravity (YG) with the hope that I could use my lived experiences to redefine the meaning of power and leadership from the perspective of a Muslim, racialized immigrant young woman.

As a young person, I am often told that youth are not included in decision-making spaces because of our lack of experiences in terms of skills, education, and other such facets of life. At the same time, I have observed that once youth begin to share relevant lived experiences, we are told that we are too naive, sensitive, or emotional. We are too young to understand the impact of critical events and decisions made by adults in our communities.

Youth are consistently alienated from decision-making spaces. We are expected to volunteer our time, energy, and passion for advocating for our communities while balancing the turbulence of our personal lives. We pressure ourselves to advocate for the improvement of social, political, and academic systems of power so that future generations do not struggle as much as we do. However, youth feel that our change-provoking ideas and initiatives are met with "No" or "Maybe Later."

IIn 2018, I attended the Partnering in Practice (PIP) conference in Edmonton hosted by the Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV) and Canadian Practitioners Network-PREV (CPN-PREV). It was an academic conference that brought youth to the same table as adult-practitioners (academic researchers, community advocates, social workers, etc.) with the hope of establishing a partnership and holding the space to have a conversation on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) in relation to Social Polarization.

This conference was unique in its attempt to bring together youth and practitioners to discuss sensitive and politicized topics. The lived experiences of Canadian Muslims allow us to witness the structural violence committed by the government to surveil our communities. Quite often, Muslim Youth are tokenized by organizations, being used to further diversity and inclusion efforts. Although I enjoyed my time and am grateful for the experience, the overwhelming sense of tokenization left me feeling that the conference was not truly designed to hear youth ideas and concerns.

The conference made me realize the importance of actively involving and engaging young people in these conversations. Discussions regarding social polarization, Countering Radicalization, Violence, or even Countering Violent Extremism must go beyond academic research. We must explore how these issues are deeply rooted in racism, systematic violence, harmful representation, and more.

# OUR TEAM

## Executive Team

**Sal Sabila**

Founder

**Jasmine Ali-Gami**

Outreach Director

**Urooj Syed**

Marketing Director

**Fatima Ahmed**

Project Director

**Aniqah Zowmi**

Content Developer

**Ariba Siddiqi**

Web Developer

## Advisory Team

Karim Hussein

Neima Hussein

Christina Loc

Rishada Majeed

Maheen Akter

## Intern Team

Mary Joy Liberato

Gianella Lazaro

Sandra Bui

# ABOUT US

Youth Gravity (YG) is a completely youth-led, youth-initiated, non-partisan group aimed towards building a platform for young leaders to pursue projects they are passionate about. YG serves youth aged 14 to 25 from different walks of life, including those belonging to marginalized or racialized groups. Our mission is to ensure that the youth within our communities (other areas, ethnocultural backgrounds, etc.) are empowered with equal access to leadership, positive community engagement, and community development opportunities, which reflect the needs of the local youth. We are dedicated to building a safe space that empowers youth to discuss our different identities and essential social polarization, extremism, and violence.

Our vision is that one day, all youth, regardless of social status, race, or religion, ability/disability, will feel that they are capable of making a difference in the communities they come from. Youth are not allowed to explore their interests to find out what they are really passionate about. YG provides youth with opportunities such as volunteering, presenting project ideas, and networking, which allows them to contribute to and shape their communities.

## LOCATION

Our organization is based in Toronto, with a focus on youth from urban settings. We are currently working with partners in Alberta and B.C., intending to set up a national fellowship program, which seeds community-specific chapters across the country. A big part of our work lies in inspiring youth to participate and create community projects, which help unite their neighborhoods and communities. We recognize the importance of youth involvement within communities, as youth bring different perspectives to community tables and build solid foundations for future engagement and participation in civic life. YG assists in amplifying youth leaders by working in partnership with adult allies and non-youth organizations.

## PARTNERS

YG was funded by the Ministry of Public Safety (Community Resiliency Fund) to carry out the Impact the Outcome project. For this project, YG is trusted by The Students Commission of Canada, a national charitable organization. Their mission and mandate are to assist young people in putting their ideas into action, empowering and improving themselves, their peers, and their communities.
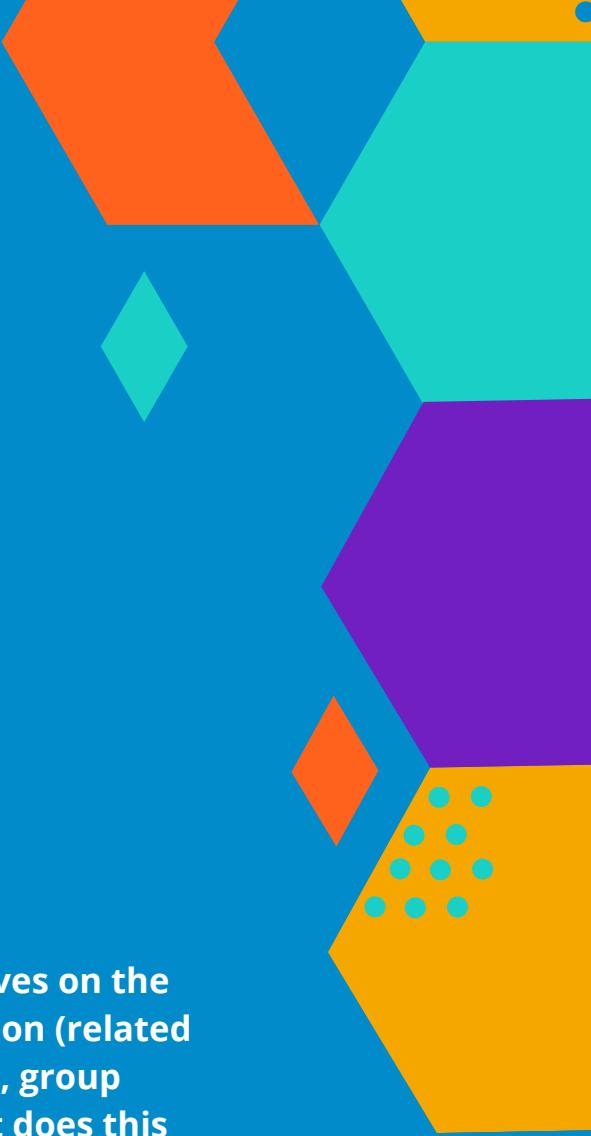
**What are Toronto youths' perspectives on the causes and effects of social polarization (related to prejudice, media consumption, group influence, and radicalization)? What does this mean for practitioners and various government orders?**

# IMPACT THE OUTCOME

*The Impact the Outcome (IO)* project consisted of activities that were all designed and led by youth from unique perspectives. In our work with YG, we found a need to address specific issues related to racism and systemic discrimination that we were facing in our schools, workplaces, and communities. Our shared lived experiences made us realize how critical peer-to-peer conversations are in helping us to recognize our experiences.

We hosted workshops focused on 4 themes: Prejudice, Media consumption, Group Influence, and Radicalization. The themes were inspired by our own knowledge and lived experiences of navigating in western society daily. Our workshops and conversations focused on capturing what social polarization meant to fellow youth and how it may lead to hate and radicalization.

The following report and findings are based on consultations with youth leaders from marginalized or priority communities identified by the City of Toronto; student-led teams in the specific communities; as well as practitioners from Organization Prevention Violence (OPV), The Students Commission of Canada, CPN-PREV, and the Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement. Our partnership began after attending the Partnering in Practice conference (PIP) in 2018. The consultation process allowed us to grow our connections and map our framework. Our peer-led model allowed us to present information to participants in a topical and relatable way.

Our schedule and itinerary were developed to keep in mind sensitivity to age and development and reflect our youth participants' learning needs and interests. Adults fulfilled the practitioner roles, and their participation supported their understanding of how to better approach youth through peer-facilitated and active discussions.

Impact the Outcome is focused on creating a platform for youth visibility and engagement. The project explored the intersectionality of the lived experiences of youth from diverse backgrounds. This project created a space for youth to meet others from across the Greater Toronto Area and build allies and friendships.
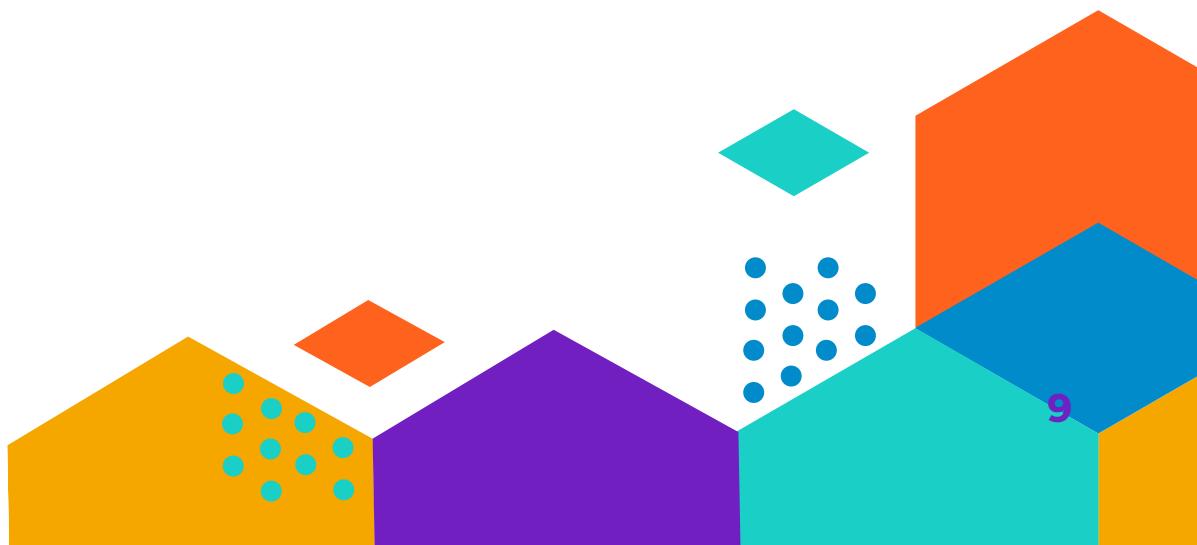
## II. PROJECT DETAILS

# TIMELINE

## PHASE 1: CONNECT

The first stage of the Impact the Outcome Project was Connect, in which we engaged in consultation and content development of the workshops, and delivered two Webinars, in both workshop and discussion formats.

## PHASE 2: INVOLVE (DEVELOPMENT)

### DATA COLLECTION

**01**

- Identified target demographic;
- Conducted research into existing resources and programs to identify gaps;
- Surveyed participants to identify youth needs;
- Developed key project topics identified in the grant application;
- Selected successful research methods and processes for accurate outcomes.

### DEVELOPED KEY PROJECT OUTCOMES

**02**

- Build capacity for youth involvement by:
  - Creating opportunities
  - Equipping youth with language and resources
  - Encouraging sharing concerns and experiences
  - Identifying barriers to confidence in a diversity of spaces
- Innovate supportive frameworks for replication in individual communities
- Prioritize lived experience by and for youth in research methodologies

### CONNECTION WITH POTENTIAL PARTNERS

**03**

- Carried out community consultations: with academic and community experts
- Developed topics, suggestions, recommendations, and content
- Planned project delivery support

## PHASE 3: COLLABORATE

We are currently in the process of sharing our results and findings with our communities.

# FALL & WINTER WEBINARS

## WEBINARS: WORKSHOPS AND TABLE TALKS

Used project plan, research points, and information from community consultations to translate proposed topics into a 2 webinar series

### PROJECT PLAN

Finalized topics

Established content and outreach deadlines, the timing of webinar sessions

Engaged outreach with target communities
- Evaluation forms to quantify youths' opinions

**A**     **B**     **C**

Formulated outreach strategies

Organized a Youth Advisory Committee to review workshop content and Table Talk questions

Delivered focused workshops and discussion-focused Table Talks weekly for two hours
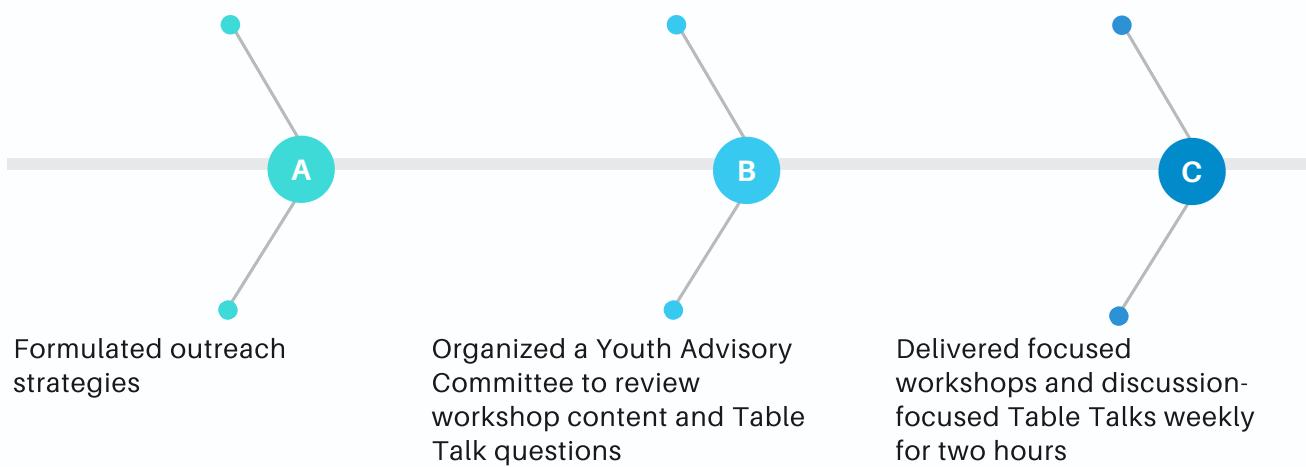
### FALL SERIES

**Regent Park and Moss Park (Mondays)**
**Clairlea Birchmount and Crescent Town (Thursdays)**
**6:00 - 8:00 PM EST**

| WORKSHOP | DATE |
|---|---|
| Workshop 1: Understanding Prejudice | October 19 / October 22 |
| Workshop 2: Group Influence and Isolation | October 26 / October 29 |
| **Table Talk 1: What Does Hate Look like to you?** | November 2 / November 5 |
| Workshop 3: The Role of Media | November 9 / November 12 |
| Workshop 4: Push + Pull Factors & Radicalization | November 16 / November 19 |
| **Table Talk 2: How does the media divide communities?** | November 23 / November 26 |

**Jane & Finch and Rexdale (Saturdays)**
**12:00 AM - 2:00 PM EST**

| WORKSHOP | DATE |
|---|---|
| Workshop 1: Prejudice & White Supremacy | January 16 |
| Workshop 2: Isolation, Influence, and Violence | Janurary 23 |
| Workshop 3: The Role of Media on Hate | January 30 |
| Workshop 4: Push + Pull Factors and Radicalization | February 6 |

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

All members of our team identify as racialized, first or second-generation immigrants and Muslims. All identify as women, and all fall between the ages of 14 and 25. YG centers the voices of people of color and immigrant communities who don't see themselves reflected in the political leadership of our regions and Canada as a whole. We encourage, empower and draw on our own lived experiences to shift the conversation. While we foster leadership by and for women, we are also invested in working alongside male-identified youth.

- Leadership: 6 Participants:
- Youth Advisory Committee: 5 participants
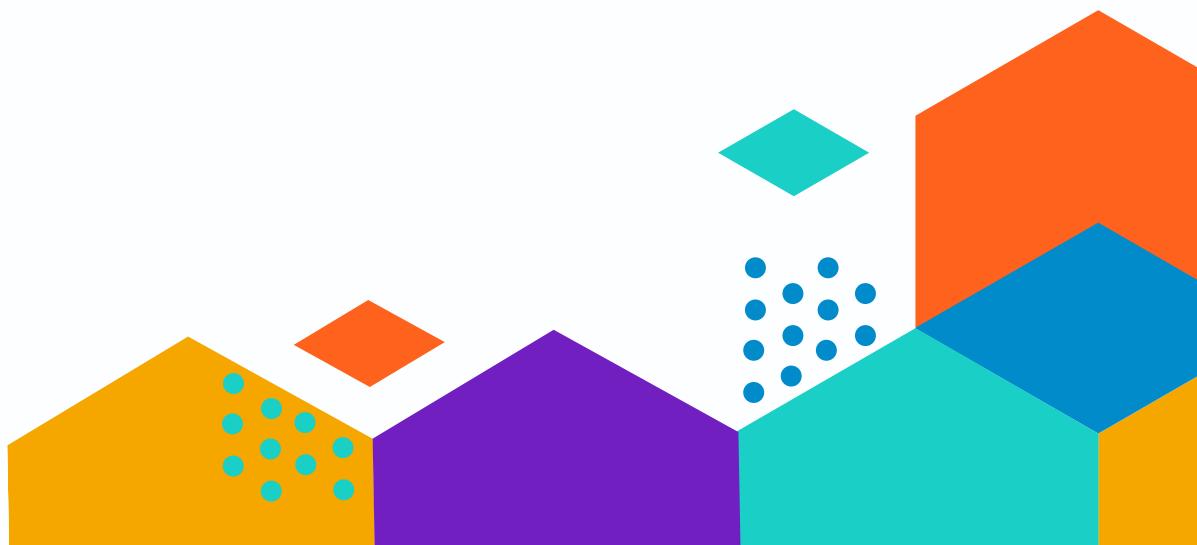
# RESULTS & STATISTICS

## PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS
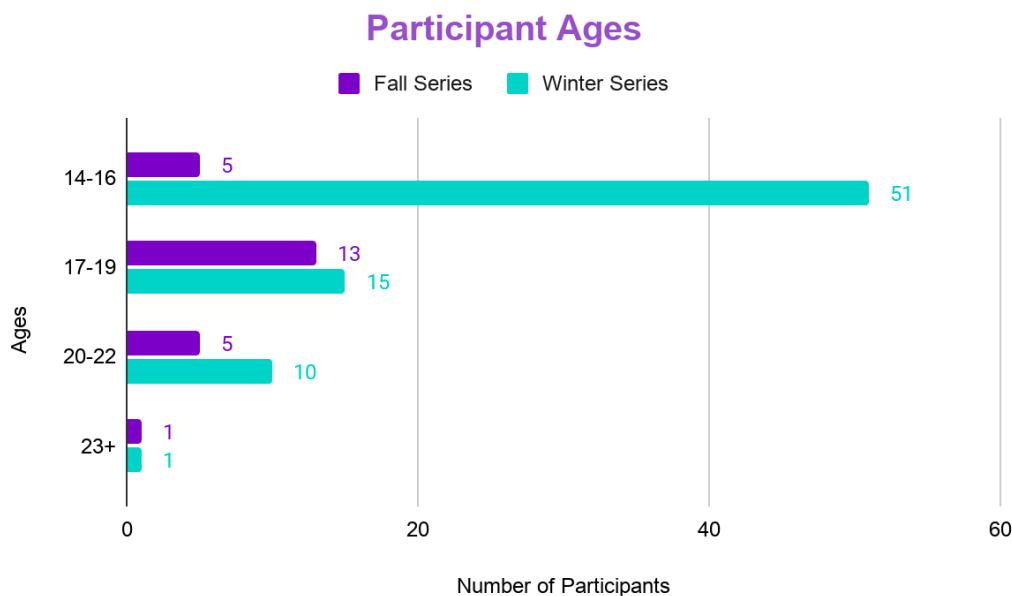
### Participant Ages



**Figure 1.0** Age breakdown and numbers of participants from our fall series (October 2020 to November 2020) compared against the winter series (January 2021-February 2021).
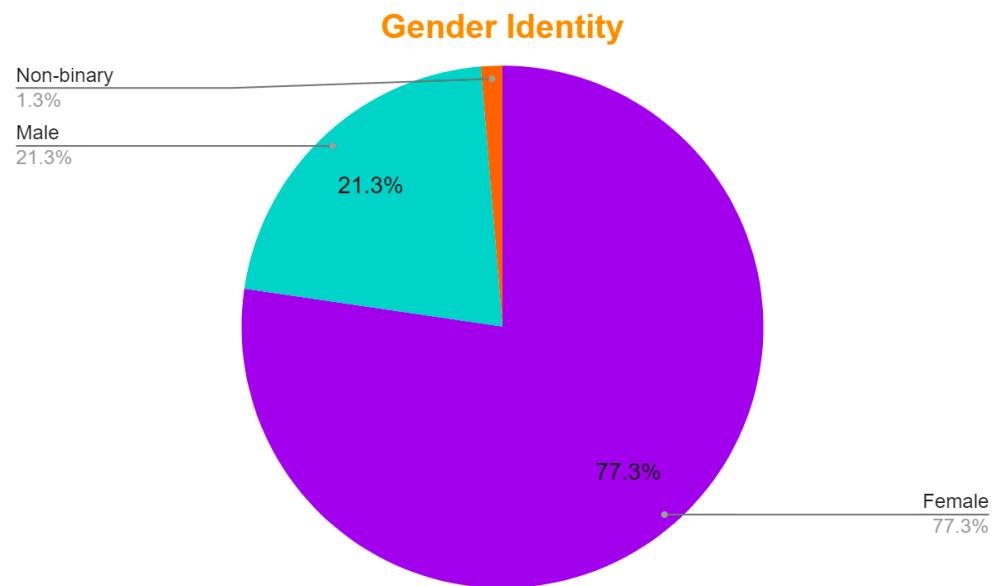
### Gender Identity



**Figure 1.1** Breakdown of gender orientation amongst our participants. Participants were asked to self-identify in the pre-registration survey.

## Race/Ethnicity
### Fall and Winter Series

**Not sure**
5.9%

**White**
2.0%

**Black**
22.8%

**A person of colour**
69.3%
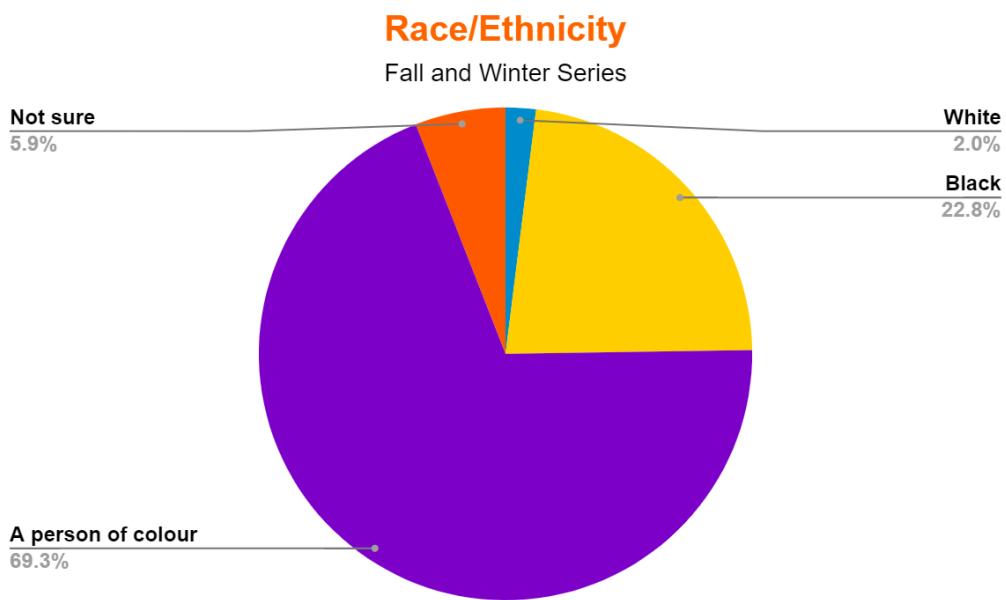
**Figure 1.2** Participants' racial identity in both the fall and winter phases of the project.
*= Person of color in this context would include anyone who does not self-identify as caucasian
(i.e., South Asian, East Asian, Latinx, middle eastern, etc.)

## Religion or Belief System
### Fall and Winter Series

**Agnostic**
3.0%

**Athiest**
5.0%

**Buddhism**
1.0%

**Christianity**
24.8%

**Islam**
40.6%

**Hinduism**
22.8%

**Sikhism**
1.0%
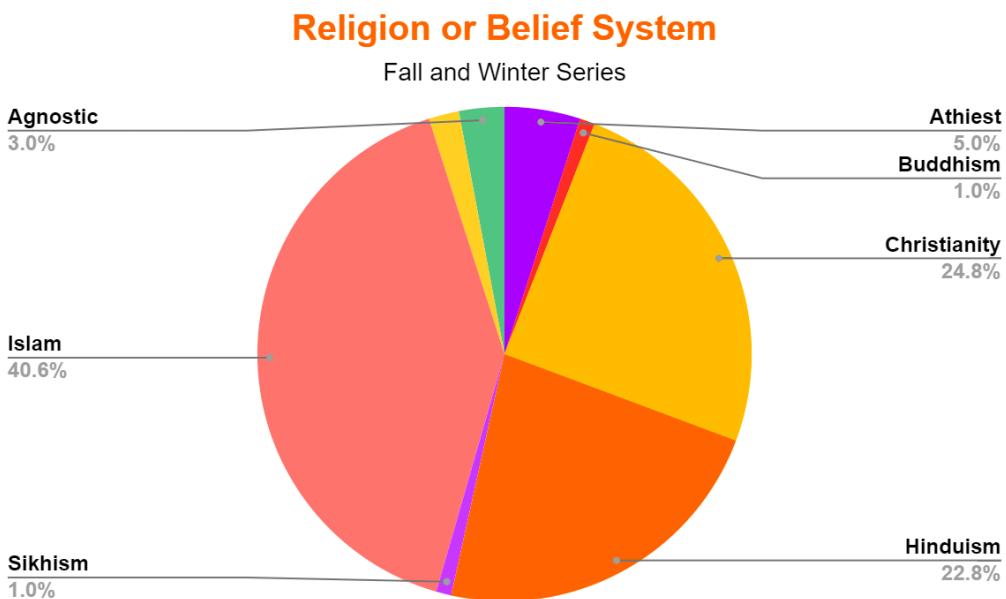
**Figure 1.3** breakdown of religious background for our participants.

## Participants born in Canada
### Fall and Winter Series



36.6%

63.4%

● Yes  ● No
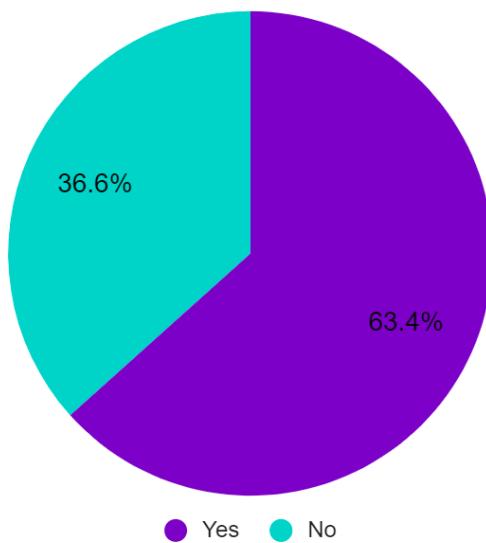
**Figure 1.4** Breakdown of those born inside vs. outside of Canada. The intention for this was to understand how cultural norms can play an active role in our understanding of systemic issues and norms as a youth.

## Parents born in Canada
### Winter and Fall Series



**One parent**
3.0%

**Yes**
3.0%

**No**
93.1%
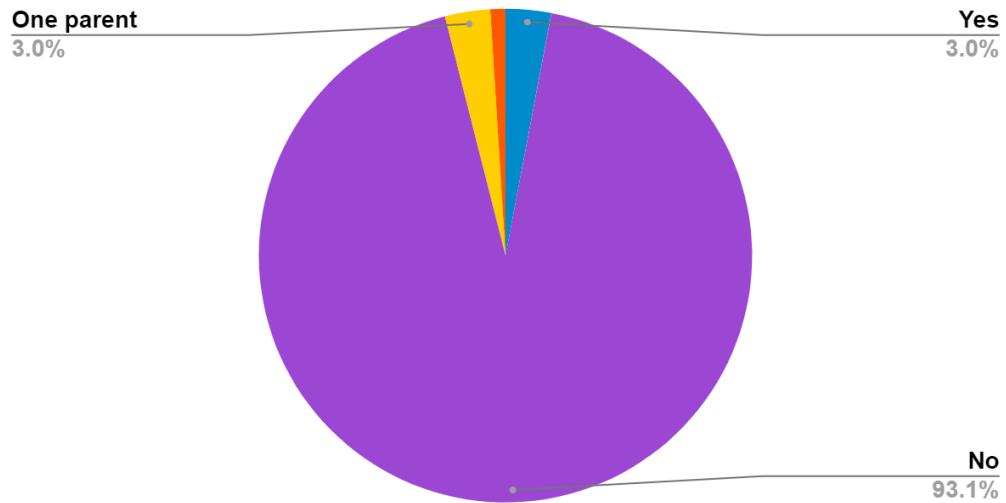
**Figure 1.5** Breakdown of those with parents born inside and outside Canada. The intention of this question was to understand the influence of intergenerational cultural values and norms on thinking in contexts such as racism, discrimination, and radicalization.
- 93.1% mentioned that none of their parents were born in Canada, indicating they are
- first-generation immigrants.
- 3% mentioned that only one of their parents were born in Canada
- 3% said both of their parents were born in Canada
- 0.9% were not sure

# DISCUSSION FINDINGS

## Do you think the world our parents lived in is better than the world we are living in now?

No
47.8%

Yes
52.2%
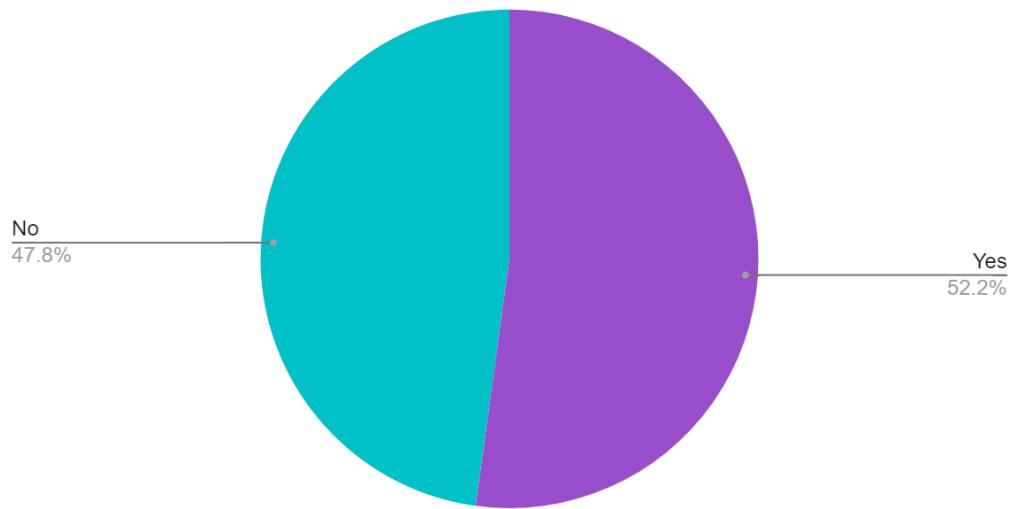
**Figure 2.0** When asked the question, "Do you think the world our parents lived in is better than the world we are living in now?"
- A participant said, "Discrimination was more normalized back in the day, so older generations grew up accustomed to that; therefore, their beliefs are different."
- A participant said, "Their understanding of the world and their understanding of violence and prejudice and racism is very different from my understanding of it because I grew up in Canada, and they didn't."

## Does the media affect your self-esteem?

No
30.0%

Yes
70.0%
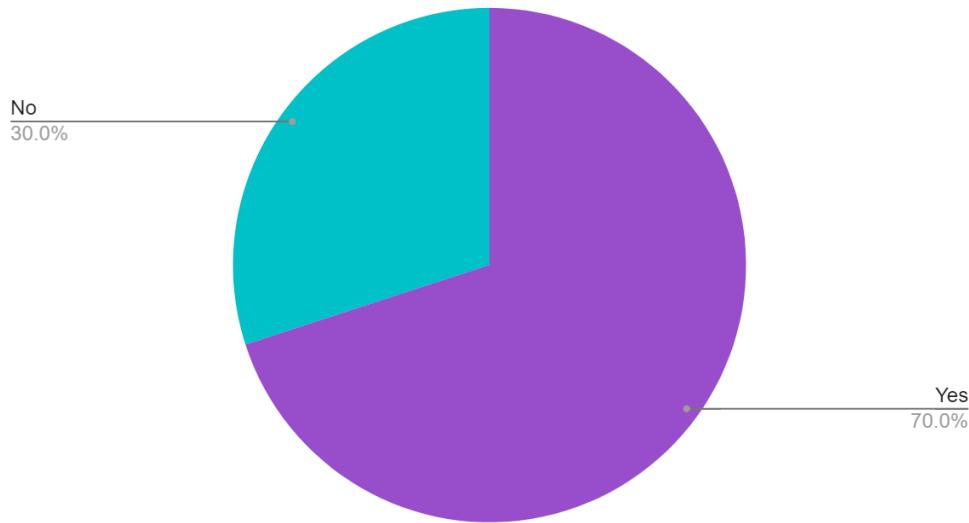
**Figure 2.1** When asked the question, "Does the media affect your self-esteem?"
- A participant said, "The part where I learned that social media use can also negatively affect teens, distracting them, disrupting their sleep, and exposing them to bullying, rumor spreading, unrealistic views of other people's lives and peer pressure inspires me to analyze and focus more on the messages and feed I receive."

## Do you think popular social media posts/reshares are effective in conveying accurate information?

**No**
50.0%

**Yes**
50.0%
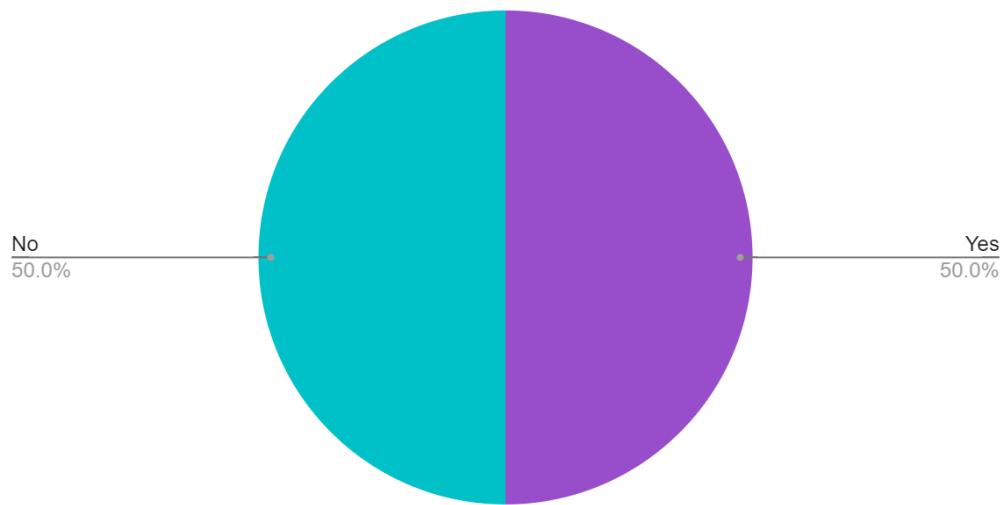
**Figure 2.2** When asked the question, "Do you think popular social media posts/reshares are effective in conveying accurate information?

- A participant said, "The media can perpetuate damaging stereotypes and spread misinformation. This can fuel certain people's prejudice, which can lead to violence and extremism."

## Do you want Adults involved in conversations surrounding creating safe spaces, racism, discrimination or identity?

**No**
20.3%

**Yes**
79.7%
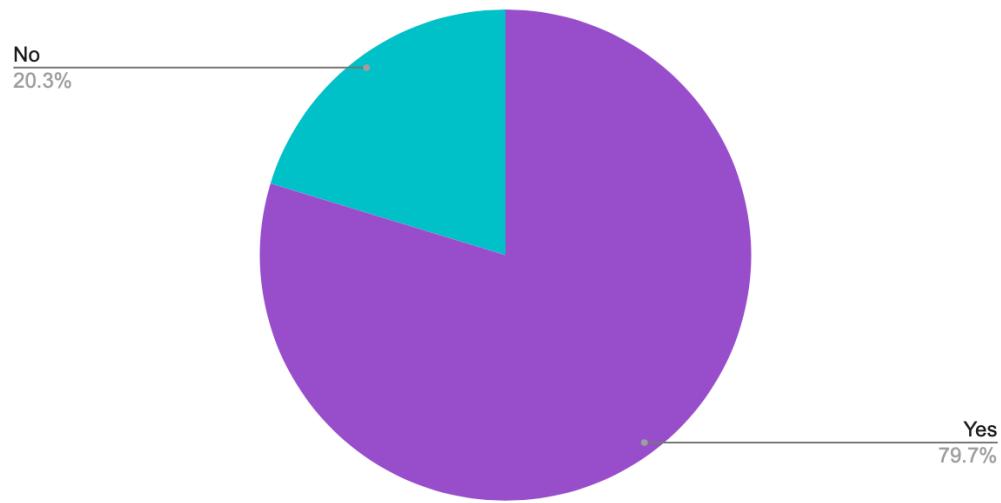
**Figure 2.3** When asked the question, "Do you want adults involved in conversations surrounding creating safe spaces, racism, discrimination, or identity?"

- A participant said, "I would be willing to collaborate [with adults] on this topic since I believe having my voice and the voices of other youth heard by adults will have a positive impact on my community and bring about change, only if those academic practitioners are willing to take our input."

# CHALLENGES

## IMPACT OF COVID-19

Due to the pandemic challenges brought to our project, the scope of outreach was redefined and tailored to be delivered entirely online. YG increased participation and awareness of the Impact the Outcome project through social media. We established a robust online presence and a strong brand voice to allow our target audience to digitally connect and build trust. We reached our goal of creating a virtual community by establishing Youth Gravity's digital presence as professional, trustworthy, friendly, and accessible. We had the opportunity to allow youth from across the GTA to attend based on their availability and capacity. Youth who could not participate in specific days could still alternate days to make up for their missed sessions.

## OUTREACH

One challenge we faced was the initial lack of registrations for our Fall Series. We were struggling to increase the number of registrants despite the approaching date of the first workshop. However, we quickly utilized our connections and updated our marketing strategy to significantly boost registrations. Methods used for outreach and partnerships are listed below:

- Created multiple spreadsheets outline various nonprofits and for-profit organizations, researchers, community members, and leaders that have taken interest or involvement in the realm of radicalization to violence.
  - Following this, we connected with various folks on the list and spread the word to multiple demographics of youth.
- Since we were focused on youth, we connected with students from different high schools who could spread the word of the workshops and were rewarded with some community hours.

There was a significant increase in participation among youth from the Fall series to the Winter series because of the change of design and delivery. The Fall Series offered a range of attendance options by holding 6 workshops with 2 table talks, delivered two days a week.

However, this proved to be inefficient as there was confusion and disconnect regarding the order and frequency of programming. We also found that many youths were unable to attend weekday sessions due to conflicts in their schedules. In contrast, the Winter series consisted of only 4 workshops, with Table Table talk portions held at the end of the workshop. The timing and simplicity of this design ensured a significant increase in participants.

# LACK OF PARTICIPATION

Another challenge we faced was the lack of participation during our workshops. Many participants opted to stay silent when facilitators asked questions. Youth Gravity's workshop facilitators acknowledged that youth engagement can not simply be prompted by turning on cameras and unmuting during discussion. To help increase participation, we emphasized to the youth that they could participate in various ways, such as typing their responses in the chat, using the jam board, or using their audio. Having different mediums to share their insights allowed more participants to engage with the content. We believe youth were more involved because the content they learned was still fresh in their mind, making it easier to discuss.

# TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

Technical difficulties also posed issues. On some occasions, a facilitator would lose their wifi; to remedy this, another team member would quickly take over and continue the conversation. Other technical difficulties included participants not having a mic, which we would then encourage them to use the chat to give their responses.

# OUTREACH

## VIRTUAL OUTREACH AND ONLINE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### REBRANDING & STRATEGY

The Youth Gravity Marketing Director analyzed the organization's current online presence and recognized weaknesses that prevented us from reaching a wider audience, hindering the participant goal for Impact the Outcome. We identified a need for a YG online presence before beginning Impact the Outcome to increase our outreach and to establish a more persuasive online presence that resonated with the age group we wanted to attract. Our rebrand consisted of a logo, a new brand theme, improved social media content, and enhanced communication with audience.

Improving media content meant that we have to consider design elements that would attract youth and resonate with YG brand image and introduce our organization as a reliable and educational source that would further encourage youth to follow us, actively engage, and become participants in our project. By staying informed of current events and politics and doing collaborative advanced readings with the team, we transformed information into accessible and informative social media content.

## PROJECT OUTREACH

Once we implemented the rebrand consistently throughout all platforms and successfully reinvented YG's brand image, we developed the copy and creative elements to introduce and promote Impact the Outcome as a new virtual webinar. After deciding on a scheduling model for the webinar series by keeping our target audience and their limitations in mind, we formulated a regular social media schedule that would allow us to consistently promote our project through
social media (Instagram, Facebook, & Twitter) and attract participants. The webinar was split up into a Fall and Winter session to focus on our different geographic areas (our demographic still focused on racialized youth from marginalized communities; however, our geographic communities included at-risk communities and communities with high violence rates). Social media and creative posters were all reflective of YG's new brand image. We frequently promoted Impact the Outcome for the pre-launch and duration of the project with variations of the creative such as different motion graphics, banners, Instagram Story posts, and moving around graphic elements to promote upcoming individual webinars.

In addition to our independent social media promotion, we collaborated with many local youth organizations to support our outreach and tap into their respective audiences, including clubs from the local high schools in the areas of our target demographic for each series.

Part of our virtual outreach existed beyond social media, where we connected with fellow leaders in the community and government representatives to promote our program across the city. We sent out emails to various community leaders such as local high schools, and government representatives detailing our program, curated graphics packages to assist in advertising, and highlighting the importance of Impact the Outcome to benefit racialized youth in various communities in Toronto.
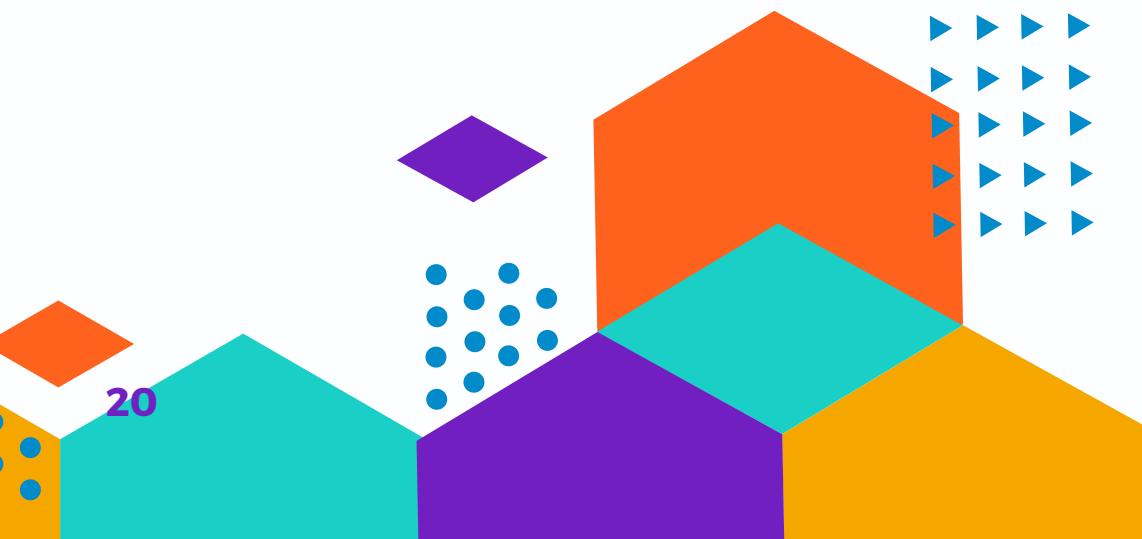
# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Overlapping Between Impact The Outcome and Youth Gravity

Impact the Outcome allowed Youth Gravity to enhance and improve our Social Media presence and engagement. Virtual initiatives linked to Impact the Outcome were positively received by both our followers online and our internal team:

**1** Posting a series of fun and accessible educational and informative materials: relevant quotes, stats for current events, and an overview of relevant historical topics;

**2** Establishing YG's bi-monthly collaborative blog, Showcase, which promotes local young talent relating to a socially relevant monthly theme;

**3** A giveaway, which engaged our audience and supported local businesses;

**4** Implementation of a digital newsletter that provides a list of updates on our current events. Lead generation allowed us to have an email audience of almost 200 recipients;

**5** Creation of a Discord server to foster more ongoing and personal communications with the community of workshop participants;

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY

In the wake of significant social justice movements and grassroots mobilization, multiple sectors have embraced and initiated conversations on prejudice, racism, discrimination, and more to contextualize current practices and procedures. Without a solid grounding of the lived experiences and the implications of these topics on real lives, these conversations can feel forced and inauthentic. To address these challenges, we organized the following recommendations by sector:
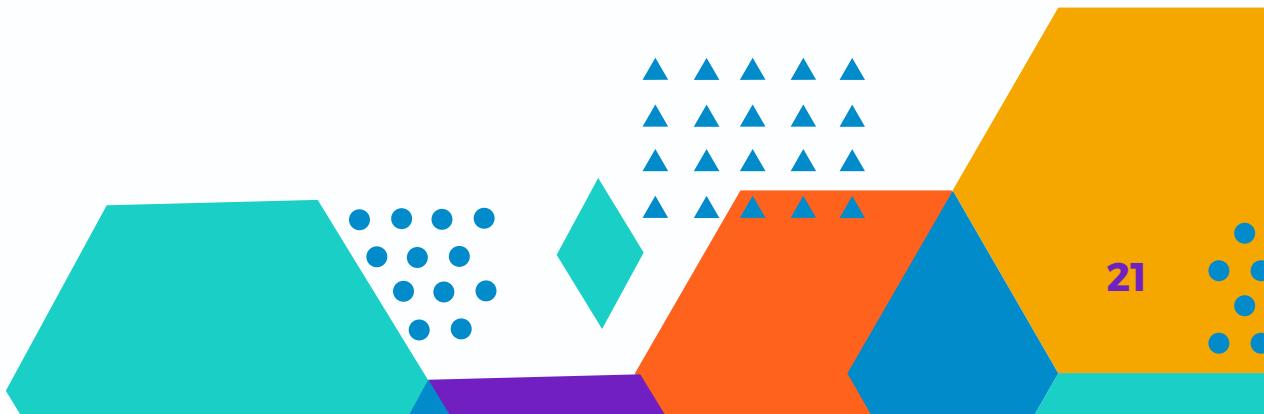
# EDUCATION

*"Have transparency, provide workshops to educators and students. Bring different perspectives to the classroom either through literature, other media formats, or speakers."* - Impact the Outcome workshop participant

Recognizing that education is ongoing and does not start and stop with engagement in a formal education system, and understanding the power of continuous education to prompt self-reflection and personal and professional development, we recommend:

**1** Allocate additional funding and resources to support community outreach initiatives in bridging the gap between grassroots initiatives and formal or informal education systems; Academic institutions and organizations should learn to contextualize the implications of these topics within the lived experiences of systemically underrepresented populations;

**2** Investing in continuous anti-racist, anti-oppressive, anti-colonial, and intersectional education in all sectors, across all ages, and in both formal and informal settings;

**3** Developing a toolkit or series of resources to facilitate continuous education across all sectors, generations, and communities

**4** Allocating funding and resources to hold conversations and knowledge translation opportunities outside of formal education spaces to enrich formal education;

# EMPLOYMENT

*"I think this is where consultation and hiring people of certain communities are essential as they would be vested in ensuring what decisions we make do not harm people in their community."* - Impact the Outcome workshop participant

Considering the current employment process, participants of the workshops believed that involving a more diverse hiring system would greatly benefit policy decision-making and benefit vulnerable communities. We suggest the following to address the current challenges in the hiring process:

**1** Recognizing, during selection and hiring processes, the value of lived experiences as equal to or more valuable than only academic or work experiences in informing the development of policies and procedures in a wide variety of disciplines and sectors.

**2** Developing a series of policies and procedures to hire members of systemically underrepresented communities most impacted by negative stereotypes who are proficient in anti-racist approaches to support local communities, initiate local programming, and serve as a focal point to help their communities in healing and action to counteract the negative repercussions of the media;

# MEDIA LITERACY

*"The perspective you learn something from is so important in informing your opinion."* - *Impact the Outcome workshop participant*

During workshops, participants articulated frustration and confusion about how dominant and Euro-centric ideals and narratives are reinforced and perpetuated within educational and media platforms. Participants expressed a reluctance to trust media and educational narratives out of fear of being inaccurately informed. To mitigate this challenge, we recommend:

**1** Allocating funding and resources to initiate and hold conversations to deconstruct and discuss stereotypes communicated within and beyond media platforms; to counteract negative ideas that are and have been associated with specific ethnic and racial groups or identities;

▶ Developing a toolkit informed by an intergenerational team of experts to support anti-racist approaches in media, for use by a variety of stakeholders, including policymakers, media creators, and educators;

▶ Initiating community conversations for members of systemically underrepresented communities to share their candid feedback with stakeholders at local, national, and international levels to meaningfully integrate their perspectives on these issues;

**2** Allocating resources and funding into media literacy and anti-racist educational resources to support formal and informal education systems at various institutions and organizations;

**3** Investing in the development of diverse media resources used in educational settings and beyond, such as hosting and facilitating access to films, books, and other forms of media from non-Eurocentric creators;

**4** Developing a toolkit and/or set of resources informed by a team of intergenerational experts that facilitates critical media literacy and understanding of the ways that media can perpetuate or push specific ideologies or beliefs;

**5** Providing subsidized access to alternative and diverse media platforms, such as streaming services created by and for diverse communities and creators;

**6** Facilitating access to existing resources and media that is not informed by Eurocentric ideologies or is created by diverse creators, including investment into providing English/French subtitles or dubs for foreign-language media, hosting multiple resources and forms of media in a central database, or providing access for institutions to these resources.
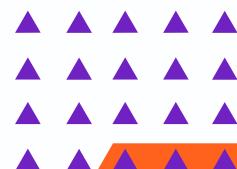
# ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

*"The blame is always being shifted when a certain group of people is the perpetrators of violence." - Impact the Outcome workshop participant*

Acknowledging that many members of workshops shared their frustration about specific demographics being disproportionately attributed as perpetrators of violence, we suggest the following to mitigate this challenge:

**1** Instituting robust systems, policies, and procedures to hold individuals and groups accountable for causing harm to others, whether intentionally or not.

▶ Including the establishment of working guidelines for organizational operations highlights the need for staff and volunteers to refrain from making generalizations about specific groups, condemning this rhetoric before it affects operating environments, zero tolerance for violence, and hostile rhetoric against systemically underrepresented groups.

**2** Integrating anti-racist principles and perspectives into informal and formal educational platforms through nurturing and educating critical thought, analysis of media narratives, and fostering solid media literacy both within and beyond youth populations;

**3** Investing, through the allocation of funds and resources, in the creation of dedicated youth spaces to address and broach topics concerning and affecting youth populations without the implicit power dynamics created by an adult presence;

**4** Bridging gaps between adults and youth populations to foster youth-adult allyship to lift youth into opportunities for advocacy, and to provide adults with the opportunity to learn directly from youth about the issues affecting youth;

**5** Allocating funds and resources to the development of programming, such as Youth Advisory Councils at local, national, and international levels, that provide youth with the opportunity to meaningfully inform policy and procedure development of institutions and organizations, including Public Safety Canada;

▶ Committing to the inclusion of youth perspectives within policy and taking youth feedback seriously;

▶ Providing youth with the information, context, and training to translate their lived experiences into practical, meaningful, and reasonable contributions to policy and procedure development;

**6** Ensuring that staff and volunteer teams are diverse and reflective of the communities that are served, specifically of systemically underrepresented communities, during hiring and recruitment practices;

▶ Prioritizing engagement with grassroots organizations and systemically underrepresented communities to source and recruit members of staff and volunteer teams;

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

*"Communication is key when understanding another side."* - *Impact the Outcome workshop participant*

Recognizing that adults may have validated qualifications and years of knowledge and experience that may position them as more 'qualified' to speak on youth issues, young people are the most knowledgeable about the issues directly impacting their generation. The contributions made by adults in spaces discussing youth issues may not be accurate or accurately reflect the multi-faceted challenges faced by young people from intersectional backgrounds. This also reinforces existing societal power imbalances between adults and young people. To mitigate these challenges, we recommend:

**1** Allocating resources and funding into the continuing professional development of staff, volunteers, and clients of organizations and institutions to continually reflect and learn about topics including anti-racism, anti-oppression, anti-colonialism, and intersectionality;

**2** Allocating funding and resources to foster and create support platforms and spaces for Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) and members of systemically underrepresented groups to collectively heal from the negative repercussions of stereotyping and typecasting by the media and to determine positive and productive ways toward an inclusive and anti-racist media;

**3** Allocating funding and resources to engage individuals from systemically underrepresented populations to engage with education sector actors, organizations, and institutions to contextualize and inform approaches to these conversations, including educational or continuing education curricula, organizational policies, and procedures, or to foster better working and learning relationships;
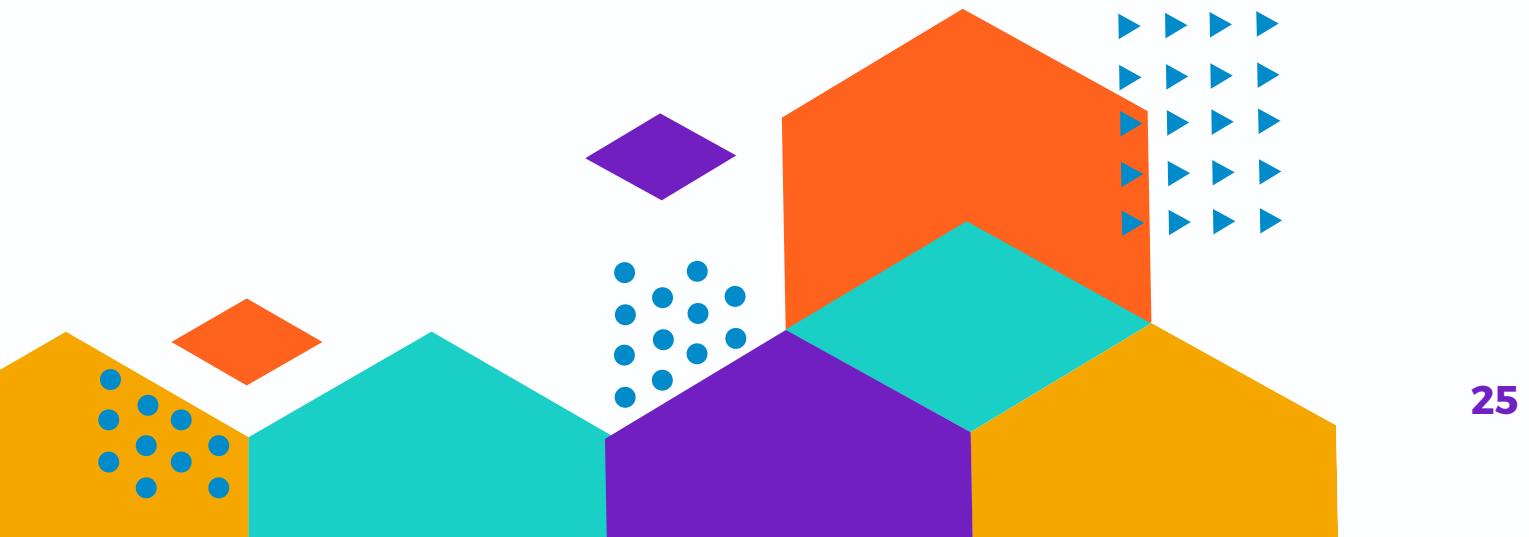
# REFLECTIONS

Throughout the implementation of this project, we experienced several challenges, as outlined above. However, after reading the participants' feedback and hearing our participants talk about their experiences and opinions of attending the workshop series, we knew this project was successful. It is not easy to talk about topics related to violence. Still, as our participants began to trust us and feel more comfortable in the virtual setting, we had people enthusiastically sharing their voices.

## PARTICIPANTS' FEEDBACK

*"It is important to create spaces for individuals of all backgrounds to connect, support each other and engage in such programming that allows them to share their experiences safely and comfortably."*

**Fall Series Participant | Crescent Town**
**November 16, 2020**

*"I would like to attend more workshops related to issues that affect the youth in our society so that I would expand my knowledge and maybe help out in the community in the future through these types of organizations."*

**Fall Series Participant | Regent Park**
**November 23, 2020**

*"Creating a safe environment where intentional conversations on such topics can be discussed and addressed would allow for more individuals to act on their own. Through discussion, the confidence given to individuals is key to ensuring the prevention of isolation and group influence."*

**Winter Series Participant | Rexdale**
**January 16, 2021**

**88% of participants felt the table talks (interactive discussions) helped them understandcomplex topics like racism and microaggression in school/workspaces.**

# LEADERS' REFLECTION

*"I have noticed that Topics related to violence and racism are often not discussed with youth in a safe/comfortable space. Through working on the IO project, I learned how to approach conversations that involve sensitive topics like violence, racism, systemic discrimination, micro-aggression, understand complex and other sensitive topics sensibly and safely. One of my learnings includes unlearning harmful stereotypes I had about extremism, as well as demystifying what being an extremist involves. I now approach these topics with a different, more open perspective and regard the media more critically. I remember one of my proudest moments when I led a session with such a big group of youth and on such heavy topics. It was fulfilling to be able to talk about my own stories with other youth and offer my opinion as well."*

**YG Community Leader | Scarborough Village
February 9, 2021**

*"I was drawn to the mission of Impact the Outcome, as a racialized youth myself and someone who grew up in a low-income area exposed to gang-related violence. Youth Gravity's weekly team meeting also pushed me to speak my mind and discuss topics with my teammates that I normally would not have spoken about. One of my most powerful moments working at Youth Gravity was when I announced our rebranding on social media. I was able to combine everyone's feedback and suggestions into a collective piece that the team was satisfied with. Once implemented, I felt like I was a part of something. I will always be grateful for the opportunity to work at Youth Gravity because I was a part of a strategic shift in its mission to connect with youth."*

**YG Community Leader | Dixon
February 9, 2021**

*"YG has such an incredible atmosphere with its brave space guidelines. I did not feel comfortable at the very beginning and had to sit on the idea of working and navigating a topic I wasn't familiar with, or comfortable with especially as a black Muslim woman. However, after much thought, I knew that the narrative around radicalization needed to be changed and I was tired of seeing the same ignorant stereotypes being used to harm and weaponize communities that have been historically oppressed. At the end of the day, my goal was to rewrite the narrative and shed light upon the many other ways radicalization exists in our communities, especially with white supremacist militant groups and neo-Nazis."*

**YG Community Leader
February 7, 2021**

*"When I first heard that Youth Gravity's team had received funding from Public Safety Canada to address violence and radicalization, I felt deeply conflicted. I had concerns about the intention behind receiving this funding, and how our team would be perceived. As I became more aware of the project goals and outcomes, I came to understand that this was an opportunity for me to take control of themes [the narratives] of violence, identity, prejudice and isolation, and learn about what they really meant in the context of my community's growth and well-being.*

*With a youth-focused approach, and the fact that our executive team is very much representative of the demographic we presented our webinar sessions to, our project has been informative and beneficial for most, if not all, of our participants. One of the biggest takeaways from this project that I have personally experienced, and that other youth have voiced on multiple occasions, is that youth do not feel that adults value their opinions or lived experiences. A majority of these youth also reported that adults never truly engage with or reflect on their voices, and instead spend much of their energy speaking over youth and downplaying the value of their concerns and recommendations."*

**YG Community Leader | Regent Park**
**February 7, 2021**
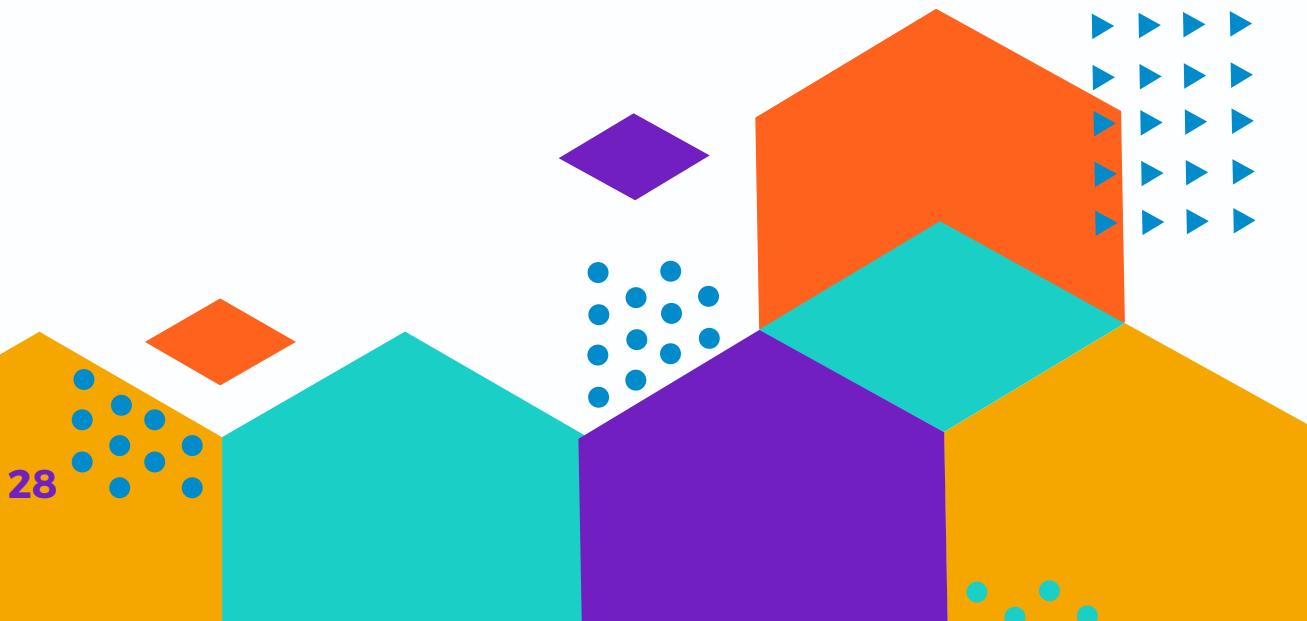
# OUTREACH ASSETS

## FALL PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

### FACEBOOK / INSTAGRAM

# WINTER PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

## FACEBOOK / INSTAGRAM

# RESOURCES & PARTNERS

Consultation Summary: Youth Justice Strategy - This summary provides an overview into the discussions and activities that took place during the consultation and highlights the feedback of young people in the youth justice system or at risk of entering it.
https://www.youthjustice.qld.gov.au/resources/youthjustice/reform/consultation-summary.pdf

Estimated Time of Arrival (ETA) is a rapid access service that supports people to reconnect with their communities in a pro-social and positive way through engagement, connection to basic needs, and social/emotional supports while bridging the gaps between a variety of services that help individuals feel validated and connected to their communities.
https://etatoronto.ca/

Time to Talk youth is a youth-led initiative that connects Toronto youth to resources through outreach, events, and engagement.
https://www.timetotalkyouth.ca/

'Casting Out' is a book written by Sherene Razack in which she looks at contemporary legal and social responses to Muslims in the West and places them in a historical context. She uses three stereotypical figures to explore creating the myth of the family of democratic Western nations obliged to use political, military, and legal force to defend itself against a menacing third world population.
https://utorontopress.com/ca/casting-out-4

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PREV

# YOUTH GRAVITY

## ↑IMPACT THE OUTCOME