

Regent Park Children, Youth and Family Needs Assessment 2019-2020

Executive Summary

Regent Park Community Health Centre

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Introduction and Project Objectives

About Us

Regent Park Community Health Centre (RPCHC) is a non-profit, community-based organization dedicated to improving the health of Regent Park and surrounding area residents, by providing high quality, integrated primary health care services, health promotion services and community capacity building. RPCHC's 2018 – 2021 Strategic Plan has identified *"working together across teams and agencies so that children and youth can thrive"* as an organizational priority. In 2019, RPCHC undertook two key activities towards this goal. First, it integrated two of its departments, the Pathways Program and the Early Years Program, into a new Department focused on Children, Youth and Families. Second, it undertook a Child, Youth and Family Needs Assessment with you from Regent Park and the adjacent neighbourhood of Moss Park to help inform the development and delivery of services and programs for families.

Needs Assessment Objectives:

- To identify the major issues and concerns affecting children and youth in the community;
- To identify the health services currently used by children (and their parents) and youth;
- To assess the gaps in services and barriers faced by children (and their parents) and youth while accessing these services and resources in the community;
- To assess sense of belonging among parents and youth in the community; and
- To engage parents and youth in framing recommendations for the development of a comprehensive strategy for children, youth and families.

Methodology

Statistics

- Needs Assessment Conducted Summer 2019 to January 2020:
 - 8+ rounds of Project Team Meetings
 - 5+ rounds of Youth/Parent Advisory Meetings
- 18 Youth Advisors from Regent/Moss Park
- 13 Parent Advisors from Regent Park
- Advisors overwhelmingly current and former clients of RPCHC services – P2E, EO, Clinical
- Surveys completed by 309 community members
 - 131 parents and 178 youth

This project spans from Summer 2019 to February 2020. The Needs Assessment included a review of data and information about the Regent Park and Moss Park neighbourhoods; a review of the literature regarding key determinants of health issues impacting these neighbourhoods and a survey that was administered with parents and youth in the Regent Park and Moss Park areas.

At the outset, a Project Team comprised of RPCHC staff members from across the organization was formed to help plan and undertake the Needs Assessment. In addition, two Advisory Committees, the Parent Advisory and Youth Advisory Committees, were created to guide the planning and implementation the needs assessment, and to participate in the analysis of the findings and provide recommendations for moving forward with action. In addition, the Committee members were trained and supported to administer the Needs Assessment survey with parents and youth.

1. Creation of a Parents Advisory Committee and Youth Advisory Council



2. Secondary Research about Regent Park areas



3. Survey design and feedback from Advisory Groups



4. Trained community advisors to apply a snowball sampling technique



5. Joint Data analysis with Youth/Parent Advisors

Regent Park and Moss Park Neighbourhoods

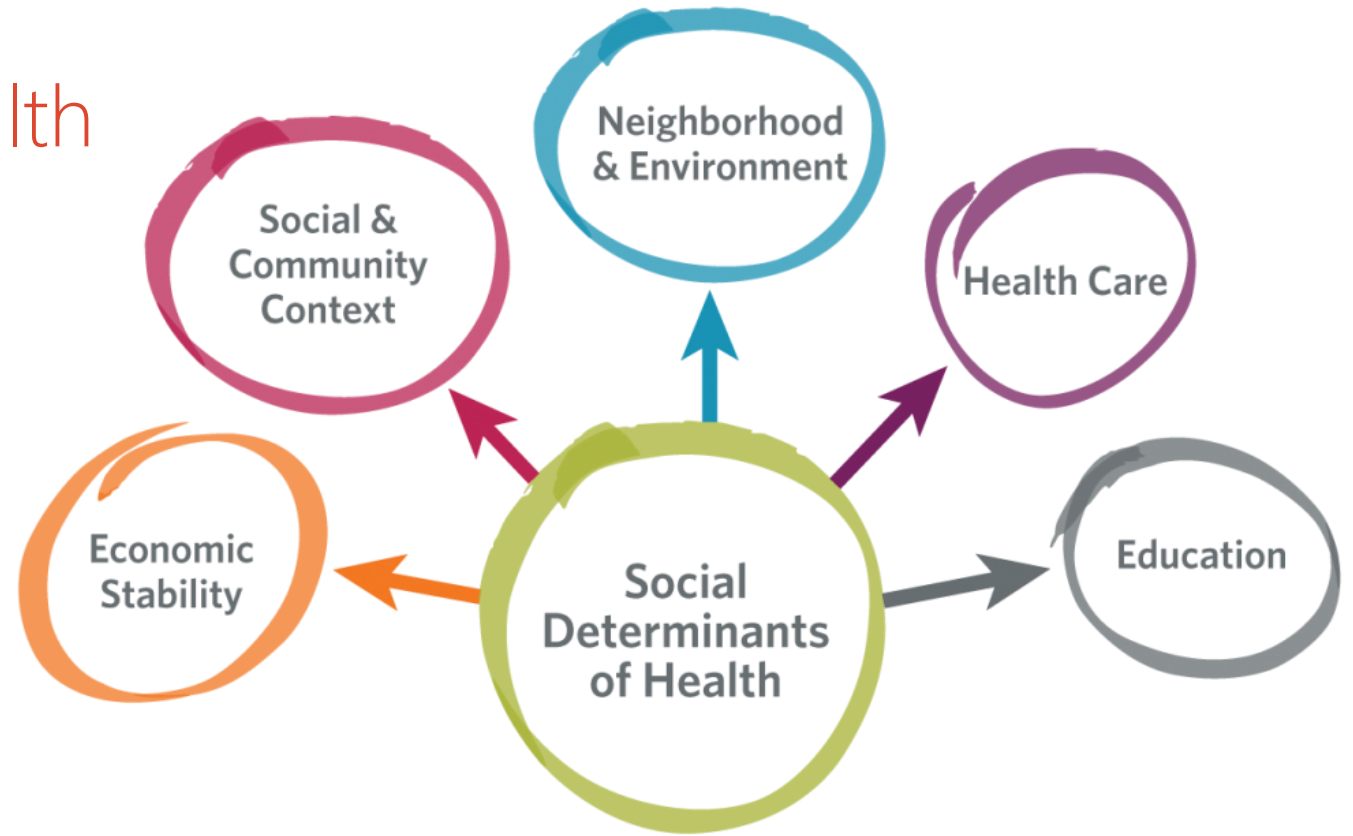
While situated next to each other, Regent Park and Moss Park vary in terms of their socio-demographic profile. Regent Park is smaller than Moss Park with a larger proportion of children and youth and a more racialized population. At the same time, both neighbourhoods are home to fewer immigrants or recent immigrants than the City of Toronto as a whole.

It is interesting to note that the **overall poverty rate** in Regent Park has decreased as a result of the redevelopment in the neighbourhood, yet the **poverty rate** is still double the Toronto rate and **child poverty**, in particular, remains high in both neighbourhoods. The high poverty rates in Regent Park may in part be contributed to the large percentage of single parent households, high unemployment and precarious employment and lower levels of education. Interestingly, Moss Park has one of the highest **crime rates** in Toronto, including the highest number of **drug arrests** and second highest **physical assault rate** in the city.



Social Determinants of Health

Background • Since 2005, the Regent Park area has been undergoing a massive redevelopment focused on rebuilding the neighbourhood for 12,500 residents over 15-20 years and transforming what was once solely a social housing development into a mixed-income, multi-use community. In support of the redevelopment process, over the past decade a number of local initiatives have been taking place in Regent Park to improve the neighbourhood, create a sense of belonging, and to bring much needed services to the community. Many of the planning tables/initiatives have prioritized poverty, well-being/mental health and/or violence/safety as key community initiatives that require a coordinated response.



The Literature Review found that poverty, well-being/mental health, and violence are issues that intersect with one another, particularly in low income neighbourhoods. Further, it found that outcomes are markedly worse in more unequal societies for eleven social and health indicators, including physical health, mental health, drug abuse, education, imprisonment, obesity, social mobility, trust and community life, violence, teenage pregnancies and child wellbeing.

Results and Findings

Surveys were administered with **309 community members**, of whom **131** were parents and **178** were youth. Respondents were asked questions about: mental health, safety, community belonging, about their concerns and service priorities and the impact of redevelopment. Some of the key findings include:

Mental Health Supports

- Considerably more youth respondents reported that they do not know how to access mental health supports or experience stigma accessing mental health supports. In addition, youth respondents, more so than parents, identified a need for mental health supports in the neighbourhoods.

Sense of belonging

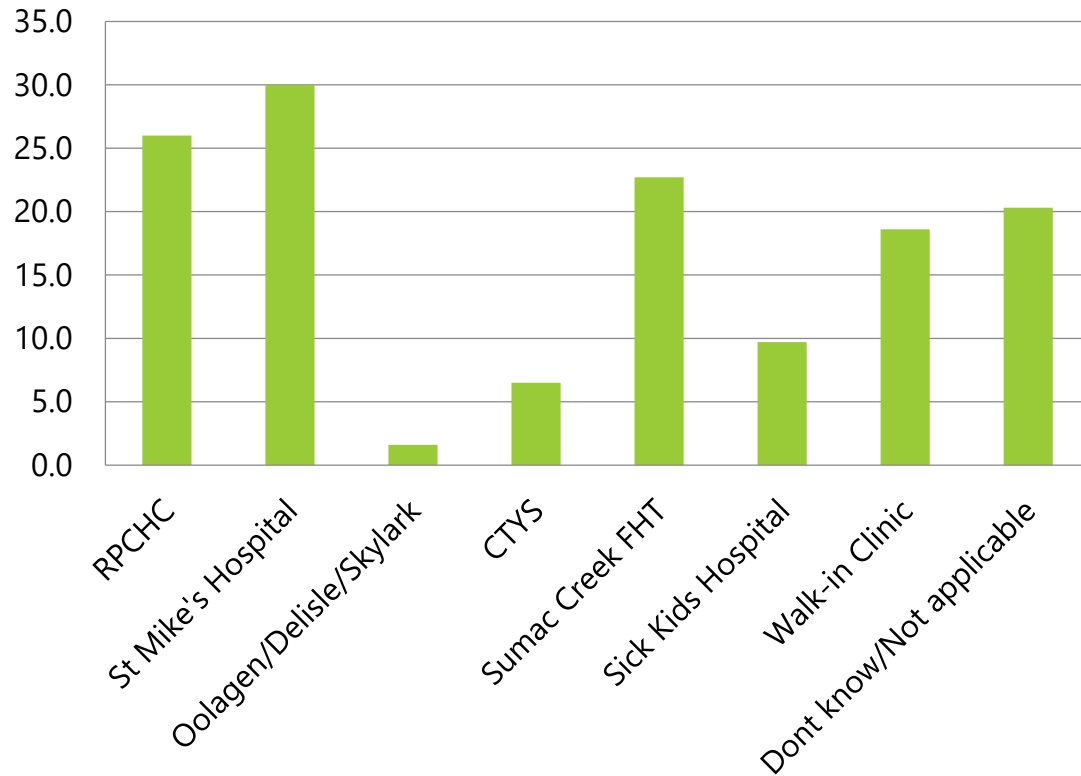
- Sense of belonging is lower among parents and youth respondents in comparison with sense of belonging data for City of Toronto residents overall. However, more youth respondents than parent respondents reported a feeling a sense of belonging in their neighbourhoods. Both youth and parents identified a need for safe spaces and programming that engages youth. In addition, parents identified a need for programming that provides opportunity for parents to spend time with their children, including teenage children.

Community Safety

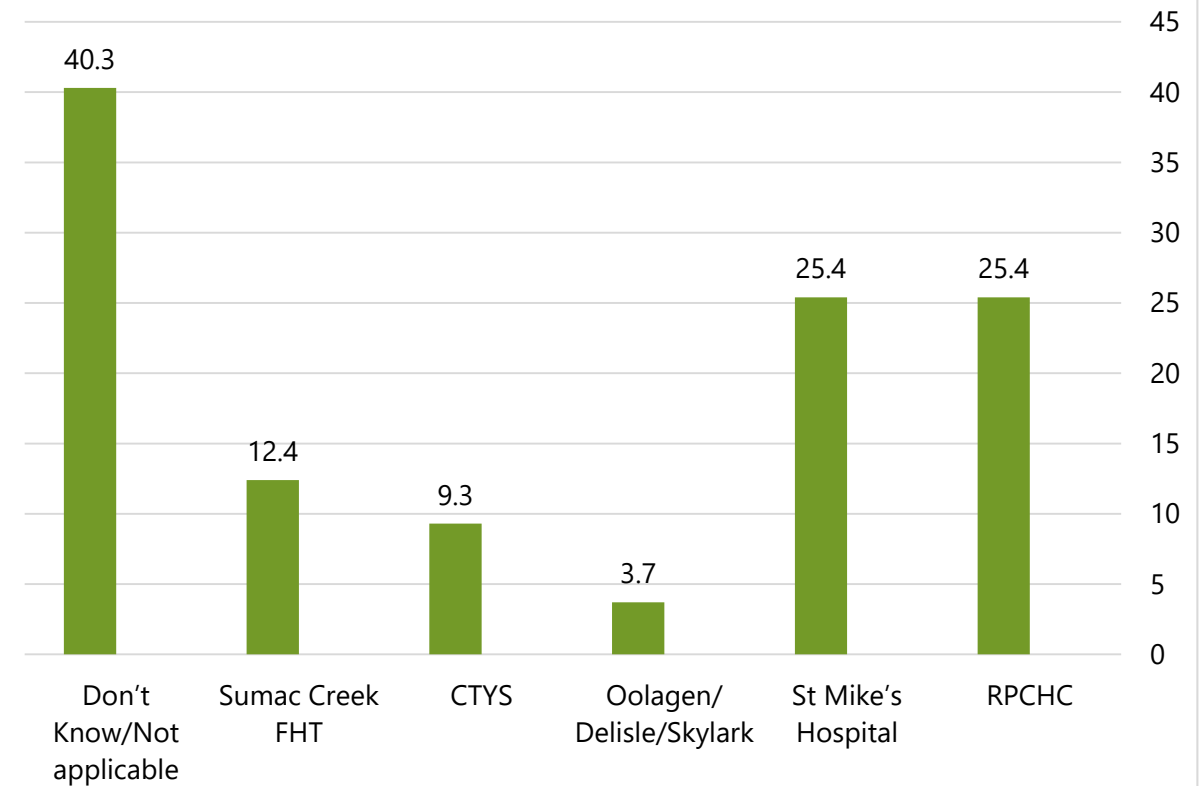
- Youth and parent respondents identified similar concerns regarding community gangs, violence and drug use. Parents and youth identified a need for both upstream and downstream approaches to address these issues. This includes social or recreational programming to keep youth too “busy” to become involved in risk taking activities. However, there is also a need to address the social determinants of health that contribute to inequities, for example, by creating opportunities that will help to improve education and employment outcomes for youth.

Knowledge of Mental Health Supports

Services Used by **Parents to Address Mental Health Issues (N=123)**

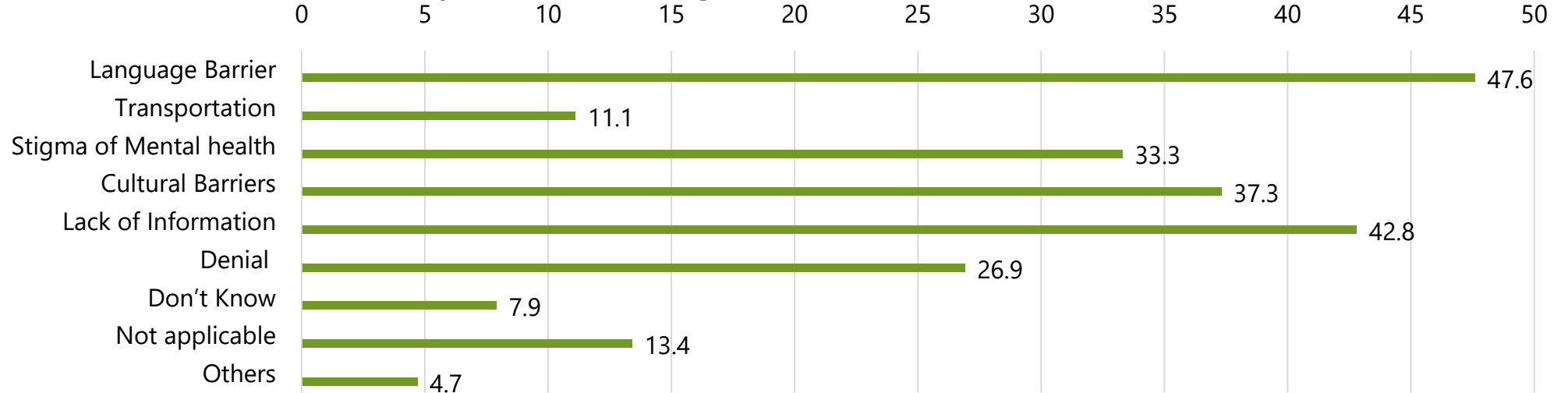


Services Used by **Youth to Address Mental Health Issues (N=161)**

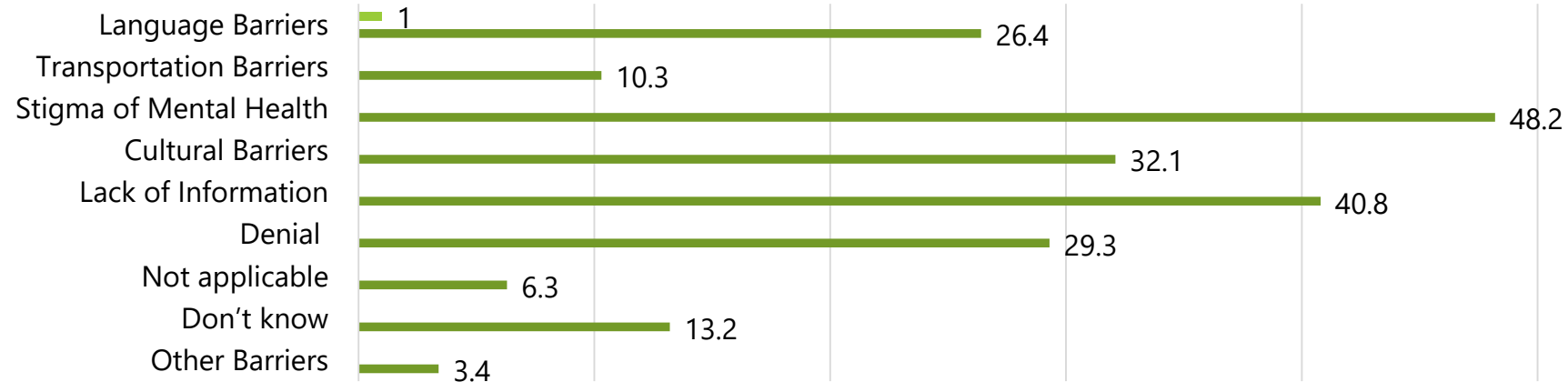


Barriers to Accessing Mental Health Services

Barriers Faced by **Parents Accessing Mental Health Resources (N=126)**

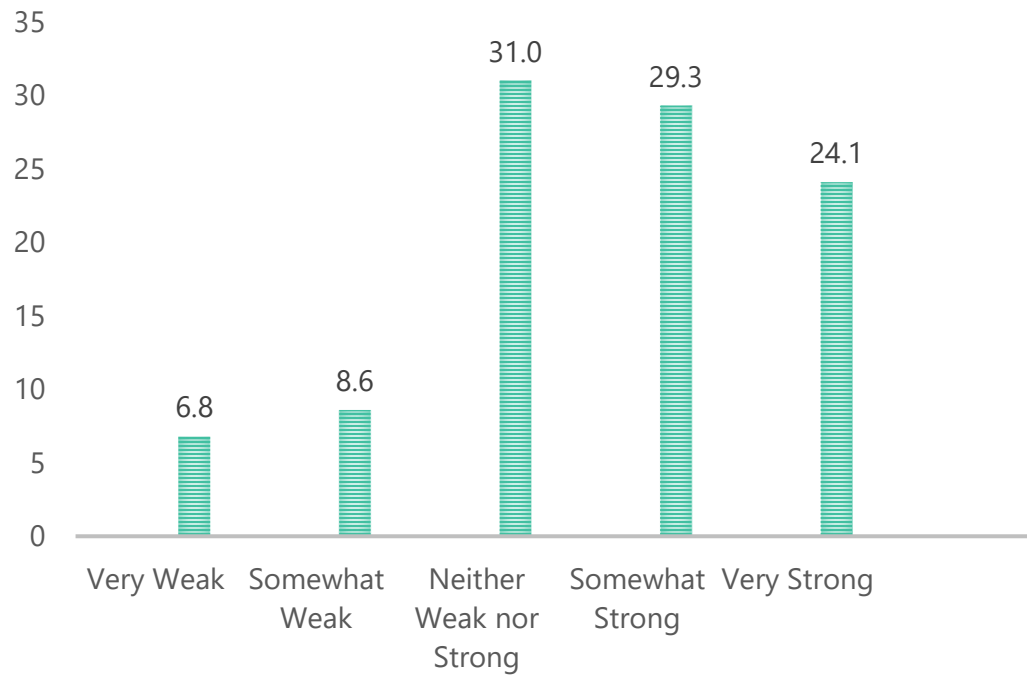


Barriers for **Youth Accessing Mental Health Resources (N=174)**

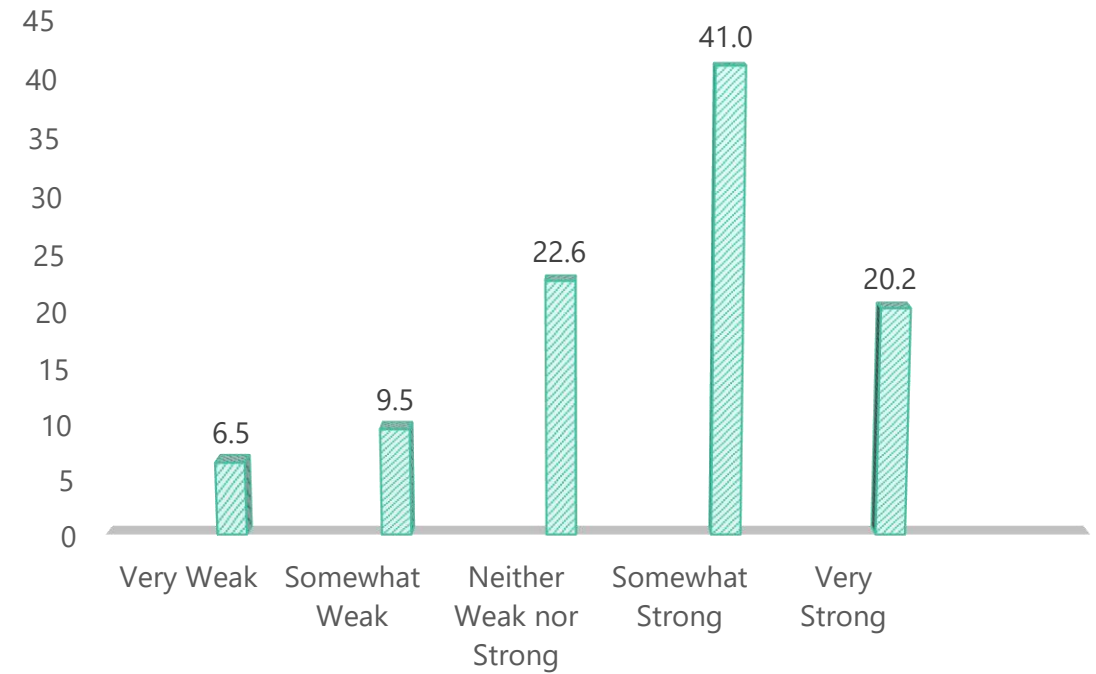


Sense of Belonging

PARENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING
(N = 116)



YOUTH BY SENSE OF BELONGING (N=168)

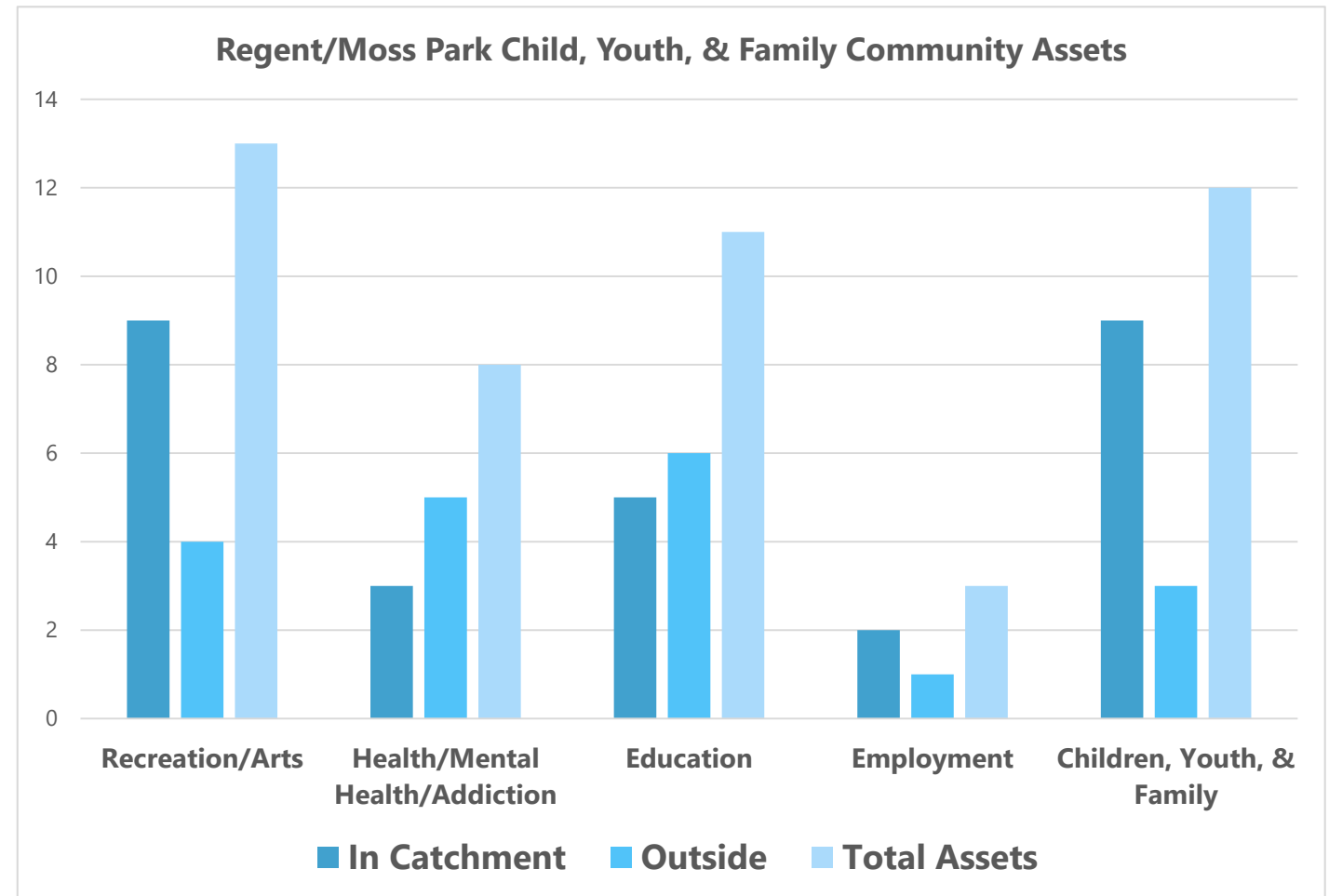
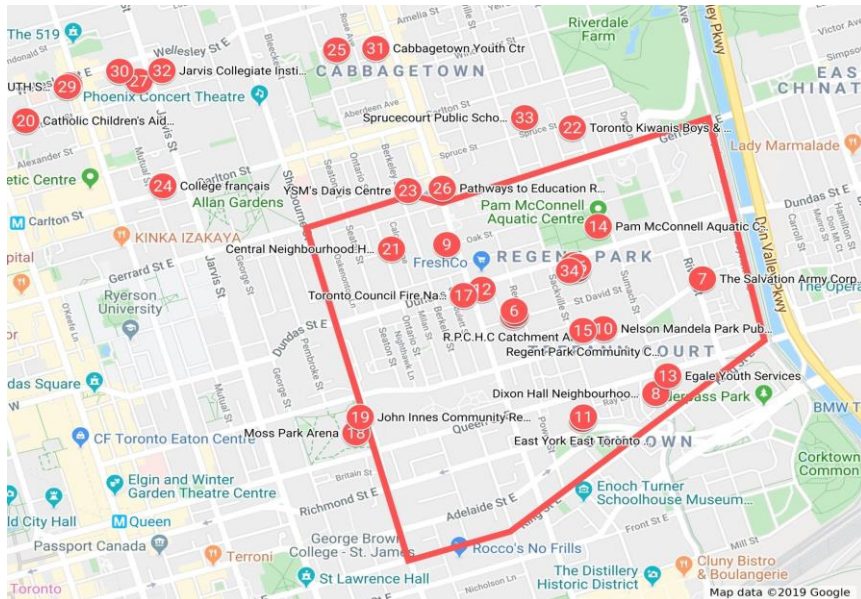


Summary of Key Findings

	Youth Findings	Parent Findings
Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 178 youth participated 75% of participants were from Regent Park Male (49.4%) and female (48.2%) participants almost evenly split More gender diversity in the youth group with one transgender person and two non-binary participants Solid representation from the age groups 13-14 (42%) and 15-19(49%) Majority of participants identified as South Asian (56%), and South and East African (25%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 131 parents participated 88% of participants were from Regent Park Participants were mostly female (83%) and there was little gender diversity in the group Most participants were 35-64 years of age (50%) or 25-34 years of age (37.6%). Little representation from older and younger parents Majority of participants identified as South Asian (44%), East and S.E. Asian (17%), and East African (12%)
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40% do not know where to get support RPCHC (25%) and St. Michael's Hospital (25%) were the most used mental health services Main Barriers: stigma (48%); lack of information about mental health services (41%); Other barriers: culture, denial and language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25% do not know where to get support St. Michael's Hospital (30%) and RPCHC (26) were most used to access mental health services Barriers: language barriers (48%), lack of information about mental health services (43%). Other barriers: culture, stigma and denial
Safety and Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 61% have somewhat strong/very strong sense of community belonging Youth do not feel safe because of violence (shootings), gangs and bullying, drug use in the neighbourhood, and racism Youth struggle with balancing education and work, finding well-paying work, and mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 53% have somewhat strong/very strong sense of community belonging (compared to 65% of TCLHIN and 69% across the City) 48% do not feel safe. Violence and drug use were the main reasons cited Reasons cited for feeling safe were familiarity with neighbourhood and community
Key Concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violence (shootings), gang activity, drugs, safety, mental health, job opportunities/unemployment/money, education (grades, OSAP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violence, drugs, lack of resources, poverty/unemployment, and racism
Service Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all youth: Recreation/sports, education, skill building, employment, mental health supports, mentor programs, and keeping busy For high risk youth: provide interventions (i.e. therapy, talk circles, mental health access), education and employment training, offering safe spaces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For all youth: recreation, mental health, parent education, parent/child programming For high risk youth: keep busy by offering drop-ins, safe spaces, recreation programs, employment For parents: training and education around gangs/violence, opportunities to spend time with children through programs

Community Asset Map

The asset map exercise found that there are in fact many services available to children, youth and However, some key services, namely employment and mental health supports within the neighbourhoods, is more limited than some other types of programming, for example, recreation and children, youth and family services (i.e., EarlyON and Early Years Services).



- A. RPCHC should make mental health services more available to children, youth and parents.
- B. RPCHC should collaborate with other service providers and institutions, such as Unity Health Toronto (St. Michael's Hospital site), Sumac Creek Family Health Team and local schools to make mental health services more visible and to reduce stigma regarding mental health, for example through joint outreach and information dissemination.
- C. RPCHC should offer services to parents, such as workshops or one on one counselling sessions, so that they are better equipped to support their children through difficult situations.
- D. RPCHC and other mental health service providers should work with youth and parents to ensure community defined solutions for addressing mental health and barriers that people may face when accessing services, particularly stigma.

Recommendations

Improving Mental Health

E. RPCHC should continue to actively support planning tables where residents and neighbourhood agencies, in partnership with the City of Toronto, are work together to jointly plan and implement a more inclusive neighbourhood.

Recommendations

Strengthening Community Belonging

- F. RPCHC should explore opportunities for increasing access for children and youth to arts, sports and recreation programming that is available in the neighbourhoods.
- G. RPCHC should look at opportunities to extend its programming offerings to younger age groups to ensure that it is building resilience that prevents their involvement in risk taking activity.
- H. RPCHC should collaborate with other organizations and with community members to undertake community wide awareness and education initiatives to combat violence or racism.
- I. RPCHC should continue to improve the community's access to the determinants of health and reduce the inequities that contribute to youth involvement in risk taking behaviour. This includes leveraging its success to date with Pathways and EarlyON to enhance child and youth access to learning, skill building, education and professional development.
- J. RPCHC should maximize opportunities for building youth leadership and employment opportunities by hire youth mentors and youth staff where possible.

Recommendations

Fostering Community Safety

Needs Assessment Phase 2

- 1. Uniqueness of the Needs Assessment:** The Regent Park Child and Youth Community Needs Assessment is the first of its kind to reach over 300 residents to uncover major issues and concerns affecting the livelihoods of children, youth and their families. Respondents were asked questions about: mental health, safety, community belonging, about their concerns and service priorities and the impact of redevelopment. Key findings were generated from the data collected from summer 2019 to early 2020.
- 2. Impact of Pandemic:** Unfortunately, the global pandemic outbreak in March has created new challenges and barriers for marginalized families. COVID-19 pandemic and related long-term lockdowns has disproportionately impacted children, youth and their families living in low-income neighbourhoods like Regent/Moss Park. Those impacts have likely further eroded the social, economic, mental, and emotional well-being of children, youth and their families in Regent Park.
- 3. Primary Goal:** The proposed Needs Assessment (Part II) is to capture the changing needs of the community following the pandemic, and engage parents and youth in framing additional recommendations for the development of a comprehensive strategy for children, youth and families.

Understanding the
community's
changing needs
due to the impact
of the Pandemic

(October 2020 to December 2020)

Regent Park Area Child, Youth and Family Needs Assessment

Contact Us

For partnership, follow-up information or questions about this needs assessment, please connect with Steven Chuang, Director Children, Youth and Family at steven@regentparkchc.org



Department of Children, Youth and Family Services

