Parachute

**For Young Drivers By Young Drivers**

Supported by

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# A framework for accelerating youth engagement in road safety

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## Canadian Youth Road Safety Council

The Canadian Youth Road Safety Council is Parachute's youth advisory committee of 20 youth aged 15 to 24 years old from across Canada. Co-leading the For Young Drivers, By Young Drivers project with this group of passionate, dedicated and insightful group of young people has been immensely rewarding. We thank our youth council members for generously contributing their time, expertise and experiences to co-lead this project.

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# Content

# Background

Road crashes are the third-leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 24 years old in Canada. Youth and young adults are also killed in road crashes at a higher rate than any other age group under 75 years old (Statistics Canada, 2020). Furthermore, young people account for 25 per cent of all road-related injuries and fatalities even though they only make up 13 per cent of licensed drivers in Canada. Road crashes are a serious threat to the wellbeing and quality of life of youth in Canada. Many young people, especially those outside of major urban centres with robust public transit systems, use a motor vehicle as their primary mode of transportation due to its convenience, its efficiency and the lack of convenient alternative transportation options.

Unsafe driving behaviour that young people are likely to engage in include distracted driving, speeding and driving while tired. Distracted driving – including texting and using social media when driving, playing loud music, passenger influence and inattention – was cited by youth in this project as one of the most prevalent road safety issues among youth aged 15 to 24 years old. Other unsafe youth driving behaviours include alcohol- or cannabis-impaired driving, aggressive and reckless driving, and improper or lack of seatbelt use. Reaching the youth population for the purposes of awareness and education presents unique challenges and opportunities compared to other demographic groups. Many factors affect young people's driving behaviour and put them at increased risk for injuries and fatalities. The most significant factors include their beliefs and perceptions about driving behaviour and road safety, their driving experience and knowledge, social norms, peer influence, parental influence, brain development, emotional state, cognitive factors, personality traits, demographic factors, their engagement in other risk-taking

behaviours, what is happening in their driving environment, and systemic factors.

In addition to the most direct consequences of injuries and fatalities due to road crashes among youth, there are other consequences that affect various aspects of young people's lives. This includes the psychological toll on those youth in road crashes and their families, and the financial costs to individuals due to medical bills, vehicle repairs and property damage. Unsurprisingly, road safety has far-reaching impact for young people and society as a whole.

There is a need to shift the conversation away from victim blaming youth and labelling them as the cause of unsafe roads and toward facilitating youth empowerment by equipping them with knowledge, skills and strategies to not only engage in safer driving behaviour and practices but also advocate for systemic changes in their communities to facilitate safer roads for all. The second Decade of Action for Road Safety by the World Health Organization, which aims to prevent at least 50 per cent of road traffic deaths and injuries by 2030, now recognizes youth as a stakeholder who can influence road safety, signalling that this conversation shift is starting to take place globally (World Health Organization, 2021).

To ensure youth are true stakeholders in the road safety space, organizations need to meaningfully and sustainably engage and partner with young people to plan, implement and evaluate road safety programming. This can be a daunting task for many reasons, including a lack of knowledge on the promising practices of engaging youth, lack of budget, time and resources to engage youth, lack of organizational buy-in around the importance of youth engagement and failure to see youth as experts who can meaningfully contribute to advancing road safety. While there is a significant number of

resources dedicated broadly to youth engagement, there is a distinct lack of resources and strategies to engage youth in the context of road safety in a world changed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Road safety is often not considered a pressing or serious issue by young people; however, visibility of a social issue has been cited by some youth as a factor that contributes to whether they care about the issue or not. Hearing parents or peers talk about social issues, seeing it on social media and hearing real stories as well as statistics makes them care about the issue. The ability to fully understand and be able to receive in-depth education on a social issue from materials that are accessible, easy to understand and compelling also contributes to caring about a social issue. Youth have indicated that being involved in creating positive change through concrete and tangible strategies is a significant motivator for becoming invested in a social issue, such as road safety.

Recognizing the need for new, innovative strategies to reach and engage youth, the For Young Drivers, By Young Drivers project by Parachute was created to provide road safety stakeholders with a framework and accompanying implementation tools for engaging Canadian youth aged 15 to 24 years old to positively impact their driving and road safety knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. While behaviour change is one component that contributes to safe roads, road safety stakeholders should strive to support and improve systemic factors that impact youth road safety, including policy, regulations, engineering, enforcement and technology. These systemic areas for improvement should also be addressed in partnership with youth to ultimately achieve safer roads not just for youth, but for all populations.

# For Young Drivers, By Young Drivers

The project is co-led with the Canadian Youth Road Safety Council and aims to effectively address the issue of road fatalities among young drivers by partnering with young Canadians aged 15 to 24 to:

- Understand the facilitators, barriers, attitudes and perceptions that affect safe driving behaviours in young drivers

- Identify new opportunities and channels for increasing young drivers' awareness of road safety issues, with a specific focus on technology and communications solutions

- Build a framework and tools that will guide engagement of young drivers and their passengers in Parachute's road safety initiatives

## CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL

The For Young Drivers, By Young Drivers project has been co-led by the Canadian Youth Road Safety Council, a national youth advisory committee of youth aged 15 to 24 years old. The purpose of the Canadian Youth Road Safety Council is to engage and integrate youth voices and expertise into Parachute's youth-focused road safety programs. Youth input is essential and necessary to ensure the quality and value of Parachute's road safety programs focused on youth and, ultimately, improve the health of youth across Canada. The council is a commitment to ensure that programs are designed, implemented and evaluated with and for youth. The framework, the project's theory of change, as well as the tools and resources used to collect data to inform this framework were co-created by the Canadian Youth Road Safety Council.

# Methodology

The framework's guiding principles, areas of focus and recommendations were informed through the following data collection activities to ensure a robust, evidence-based tool applicable to multiple contexts.

- **Literature review and environmental scan** were conducted in November and December 2021. The literature review and environmental scan summarize findings on factors that impact driving behaviour in young people; youth engagement and partnership strategies in health promotion and injury prevention programming; and tools and platforms used to engage young people in health promotion and injury prevention. Findings from 120 English journal articles and 14 grey literature sources from between 2016 to 2021 were extracted and analyzed to create a summary report in French and English. The purpose of the report was to increase the understanding of best practices in youth engagement within road safety and inform key questions for the data collection tools.

- **National Youth Road Safety Survey** was conducted in May and June 2022 and sought to understand 15- to 24-year-old Canadians' thoughts on how they think and feel about safe driving behaviours; how they behave on the road; what and who influences their driving behaviours; and where they go for trusted information on road safety. In total, 224 Canadian youth completed the survey, with 204 respondents from the English survey and 17 respondents from the French survey. Survey respondents were from the 10 provinces and one territory, with the majority from Ontario, Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia.

- **Focus groups** were conducted monthly with the Canadian Youth Road Safety Council to deeply explore a variety of road safety and youth engagement topics. Ten focus groups were completed, and topics explored included youth social media preferences, elements of road safety advertisements that resonate with youth, best practices when communicating with young people and facilitating youth advocacy in road safety.

- **Peer interviews** by members of the Canadian Youth Road Safety Council were done in July and August 2022 to delve more deeply into the youth perspective on road safety, driving behaviour and youth engagement. Members used a co-created peer interview guide with open- and closed-ended questions to conduct an interview with one to three of their peers aged 15 to 24 years old and recorded notes from the conversation.

- **Expert interviews** were done with 11 individuals across Canada who had expertise in road safety and engaged youth in their organization. The experts were questioned about road safety, best practices for youth engagement and insights into youth driving behaviour using an interview guide co-developed with the Canadian Youth Road Safety Council.

The circular framework diagram shows: **Youth Partnership**, **Youth Communication**, **Youth Outreach**, **Youth Capacity-Buidling**, **Youth Advocacy** surrounding a center with three guiding principles: **MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**, **HARM REDUCTION**, and **EQUITY, DIVERSITY INCLUSION & ACCESSIBLITY**.
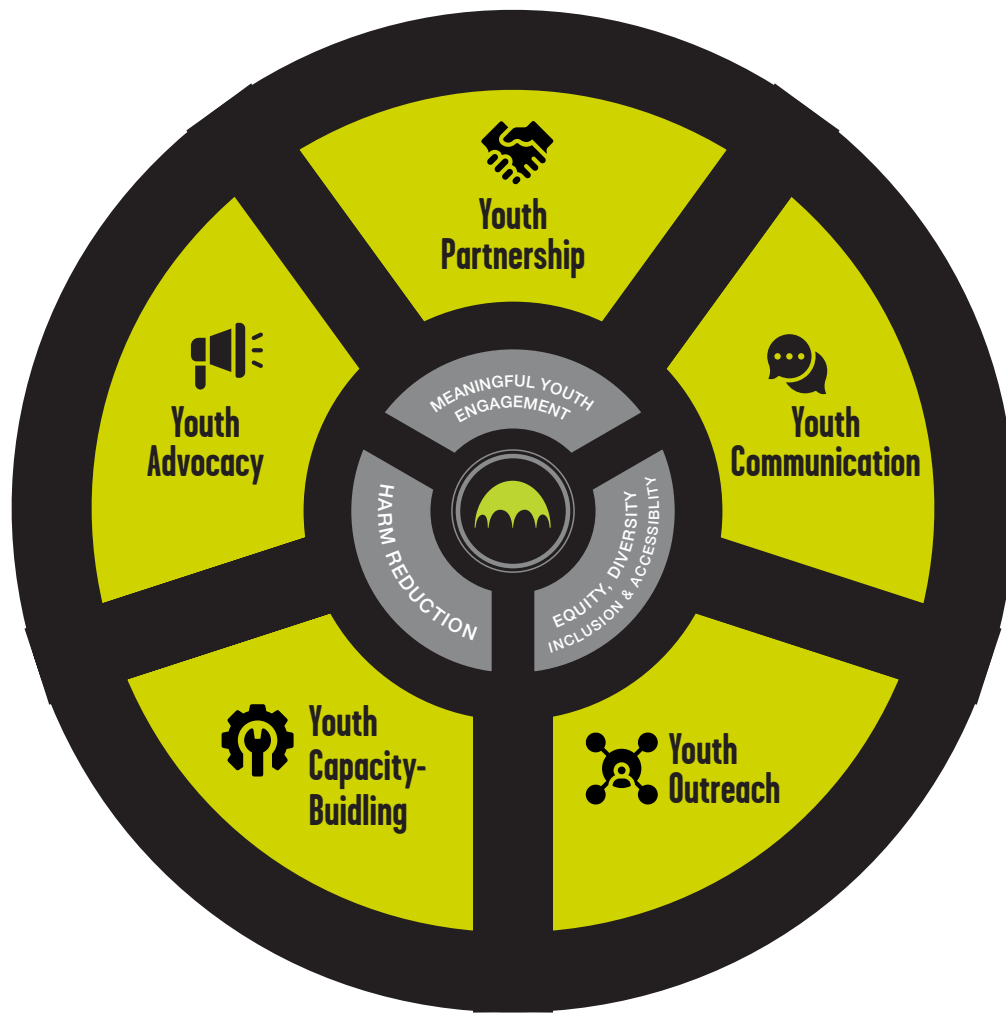
# The Framework

The purpose of this framework is to:

- Help road safety stakeholders in Canada understand what meaningful youth engagement is, the importance of meaningful youth engagement and the benefits of meaningful youth engagement in improving road safety

- Improve road safety stakeholders' understanding of technology- and communications-based solutions for reaching young drivers and passengers

- Equip road safety stakeholders with effective strategies and practices to support youth engagement in their road safety programming and initiatives

The framework consists of three guiding principles, five areas of focus and accompanying recommendations for each area of focus. The areas of focus are not necessarily distinct categories but rather overlap and feed into each other. They are shown as distinct categories to visually depict the different elements need to holistically engage youth in road safety. Organizations can choose which elements of the framework to implement according to what best aligns with their mandate and goals. The recommendations outlined in the framework are based on recurring themes in the data collected for this project. These are strategies that both young people and experts in road safety and youth engagement believe will result in changes to young driver knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

# Guiding principles

These are principles that should be applied to and drive all aspects of engaging youth in road safety programming. These three guiding principles were significant and recurring themes across all data collection activities and were strongly felt by many to be necessary to shift youth engagement in road safety programming to one that is empowering, sustainable, and impactful. Organizations are encouraged to establish what each guiding principle means in their context and outline policies and procedures that will ensure these guiding principles are being followed.

## MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Meaningful youth engagement in health promotion and injury prevention programming will lead to healthier, safer youth as well as more effective programming. Meaningful youth engagement provides youth with multiple opportunities to practise their skills, including leadership skills in real-world settings, making decisions that impact their daily life and enables organizations to recognize the value of youth voices in making an impact in their communities (Ramey et al., 2019). Youth engagement activities that facilitate empowerment and instill a sense of agency within youth have three critical components: skill development, opportunities and critical awareness (Cardarelli et al., 2021).

Examples of meaningful youth engagement in road safety can include advocating for changes in the built environment, spreading information and resources on safe behaviours to their peers and networks and developing programs that address specific road safety needs (Vision Zero for Youth, n.d.). Stakeholders can turn to the many different youth engagement models and theories to help support their engagement, including the critical social theory of youth empowerment (Jennings et al., 2006), positive youth development (Hinson et al., 2016) and McCain Model of Youth Engagement (Heffernan et al., 2017).

While meaningful youth engagement in road safety can look different according to context and resources available, there are some commonly cited strategies outlined by the subject matter experts and young people interviewed for this project.

- **Go to where youth are:** Young people cannot be expected to actively seek out accurate road safety information and opportunities for involvement. Young people may be too busy, uninterested or uninformed as to where to go for information or unable to access resources and information. Organizations can strive to make it easier for youth to access road safety information by going directly to where youth are. For example, build relationships with community organizations, local schools and other places where youth are frequently engaged to reach young people, including young people at higher risk for experiencing the negative consequences of road crashes. This also includes engaging youth through platforms that they are more likely to use, such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat and Discord.

- **Treat youth as expert decision-makers:** Youth are the most in tune with their needs and gaps in knowledge and skills. Labeling youth as victims or as troublemakers on the road within the complex and multifaceted area of road safety can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy, where youth accept their pre-labelled role in road safety potentially leading to a lack of motivation, effort and need to change risky driving behaviour. It can also lead to organizations losing their credibility among young people and make young people uninterested in what organizations have to say. Accepting youth as expert decision-makers and not just beneficiaries can lend itself to having empowered youth who effect change in their communities.

- **Provide a variety of meaningful engagement options for youth:** Youth have multiple priorities, differing abilities, differing experiences, and differing levels of comfort in participating. Providing a variety of avenues for youth to build road knowledge and skills can maximize reach and increase interest in road safety. Youth can engage with road safety information and skills through art, music, theatre-based learning, content creation, advocacy and more. It also means minimizing barriers to participation such as providing accessible tools and eliminating or minimizing out-of-pocket costs for youth participation.

- **Use youth-friendly language, interests and trends:** Many youth don't like to be bombarded with facts as this is difficult to retain and can seem like an impersonal way to provide information. Avoid or explain jargon and acronyms that may be outside the scope of youth knowledge. Using examples and analogies that may be relevant to youth can also help explain complex ideas. Ask young people to review materials before wider distribution to make sure they are youth-friendly.

## EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

The youth population is not a monolith. Intersecting identities often mean that there are different needs for different populations of youth. Organizations should continually consider the inequities that some youth face when it comes to transportation access and wellbeing outcomes because of the systemic disadvantages they experience as a result of race, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, immigration status, gender, age, disability, region and other factors. For example, the dangers of driving on icy roads in remote reserves require dedicated, unique, accessible resources to address this issue and prevent negative outcomes such as drownings among Indigenous youth. Similarly, newcomers from countries that have significantly different road rules and types of vehicles also face unique challenges when using roads in Canada. In addition to death and injuries, unsafe roads and driving behaviour can be barriers for underserved youth populations to access important services and needs such as healthcare, employment and education.

Organizations are encouraged to gain a thorough understanding of the inequitable conditions that underserved youth populations in their target audience face and actively create and implement activities that provide access and opportunities to all youth populations during the planning, implementation and evaluation of road safety programming to address their needs in the context of road safety. Depending on the needs of each stakeholder's target audience, creating specific interventions toward populations of young drivers who are more prone to risky driving behaviour may be needed to effectively influence their understanding and knowledge of risk awareness and risky behaviour. An example of a population-specific road safety intervention was the creation of a road safety walking tour for newcomer youth in Surrey, British Columbia. This intervention engaged newcomer youth, a population at higher risk for road injuries and fatalities, in creating a walking tour that would promote conversations around road safety, resource sharing among youth and their families, and improve their wellbeing through meaningful community relationships. Surrey newcomer youth participated in planning arts-based activities and led conversations about the walking tour and road safety (Art On the Go, n.d.).

### HARM REDUCTION LENS

Many of the interviewed road safety and youth engagement experts stressed the need to apply a harm reduction lens to road safety programming and messaging aimed at preventing impaired driving among youth. A harm reduction lens moves away from an abstinence-only model and acknowledges that there are young drivers who will partake in alcohol and other substance use.

In the context of road safety, driving under the influence is the behaviour we are aiming to modify, not the actual use of alcohol and drugs. According to the interviewed experts and youth, they have observed that "preaching" to young people about alcohol and drug use and the legalities of using these substances while talking about road safety is not likely to hold their attention, can cause young people who use these substances to become uncomfortable and unreceptive to road safety messaging and cause confusion as to what behaviour change is being promoted.

Applying a harm reduction lens to road safety means providing concrete strategies on how youth can mitigate harm for themselves and others from immediate risks on the road after engaging in alcohol and drug use, without necessarily aiming to reduce alcohol and drug use (Ball, 2007). It destigmatizes substance use and addresses the realities of youth alcohol and drug use by providing evidence-based information to keep them safe.

# Areas of focus



## YOUTH PARTNERSHIP

*"Youth that are of age to drive want to be treated as adults since they are maturing and assuming more responsibilities."*
– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER

This area of focus outlines what meaningful youth partnership in road safety looks like and strategies to accomplish this.

Youth partnership requires long-term investment of resources in order to have representative youth who are involved in all parts of an initiative, including agenda setting, decision-making and evaluation. They build their skills and capacity to do the work needed to improve road safety for themselves and their peers and partners tap into the youth's wealth of knowledge and expertise and enable a sustainable mechanism for continued youth engagement in youth road safety. There are multiple ways that organizations can implement youth partnerships, including forming youth advisory committees, establishing a youth ambassador network and conducting youth-led needs assessments and evaluations.

### Recommendations

- Integrate youth partnership into strategic plan
- Establish youth advisory committee to co-create and co-lead road safety initiatives
- Work with network of youth ambassadors
- Engage youth in evaluating road safety messages and programs

### Integrate youth partnership into strategic plan

*"I feel that many organizations almost talk down to young people. I find that youth are not often given the respect they deserve and this makes them very uninterested in many organizations."*
– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER

Youth are officially recognized as a stakeholder in the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety by the World Health Organization, a change from the First Decade of Action for Road Safety. It is imperative for road safety organizations to prioritize the improvement of road safety for younger generations. One way to do this is to establish meaningful youth partnership, where youth are capable and equal partners, as a strategic goal to ensure that resources and activities are devoted to accomplishing this goal during planning. This sets the stage for sustaining youth partnership in the long term and indicates an organization's position on the value of youth partnership.

### Establish youth advisory committee to co-create and co-lead road safety initiatives

*"It's a big leadership-building tool for youth… we focus on road safety but we forget that these are for developing young people who are going to become the people running the planet."*
– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 4

A Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) is a group of young people selected by organizations to work in partnership with and often advise on issues that affect them. YACs are becoming a popular and structured way to partner and engage youth across many fields. Youth in YACs should ideally co-lead an initiative's planning, implementation and evaluation with the organization. YACs are one of the ways that organizations can facilitate youth empowerment as youth build important leadership and advocacy skills that are not only necessary for the next generation of road safety advocates but are also relevant to their personal and professional goals.

### Work with a network of youth ambassadors

*"We have so many young people who have been massively affected by road crashes: some of them*

*are road crash survivors, some of them lost someone due to a fatal road crash, so we need to make them understand that they have a role to play because you know what it feels like to lose someone and you know what it feels like to be affected by road crashes."*
– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 9

Youth ambassador programs train, mentor and support youth to work within their communities to raise awareness and educate about road safety. Ambassadors are in tune to what's trendy with their peers, what type of messaging their peers might be receptive to and the best channels to reach their peers. Ambassadors are often those who have been impacted by road crashes themselves, either directly or indirectly. Ambassadors can be used to spread road safety messaging in a variety of ways, including:

- creating a youth-led channel on YouTube and other social and digital media platforms to post content that facilitate peer-to-peer communications, an effective way to influence youth to be receptive to road safety messaging and information
- promoting and sharing road safety resources and information as well as their own personal experiences on their own social media accounts
- run in-person programming with provided materials in youth-centric areas including schools or community centres

Ideally, ambassadors should be in charge of how they want to spread road safety messaging and develop a strategy to do this with support from organizations. Ambassadors can be incentivized through completion of their mandatory volunteer hours, receiving an honorarium and building skills relevant to their personal and professional goals. Important skills they can develop and improve include event and project management, media literacy, marketing, public speaking and leadership.

Recruit ambassadors who other youth will be able to resonate with, are representative of the population (especially youth populations most likely to be impacted by unsafe driving behaviour) and may want to share their personal experiences about road safety and driving behaviour. When recruiting ambassadors, it's also important to understand busy periods in youths' lives and important events to optimize recruitment and engagement.

## Engage youth in evaluating road safety messages and programs

*"The key thing I learned was you really do need to do some evaluation of whatever it is that you're using to change behaviour. It's behaviour in the end and any variable can influence it or not."*
– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 6

Demonstrating the effectiveness of road safety programming and messaging on youth can be complicated but partnering with youth to do evaluation can provide significant insight into gaps in youth knowledge and skills, what works for youth, as well as enable youth to develop important personal and professional skills.

Evaluation is incredibly important to determine whether behaviour change or other planned outcomes have occurred as a result of an initiative. Many road safety organizations use pre- and post-intervention surveys with youth to determine if there has been an effect. Survey completion has been cited as a challenge by road safety experts. Providing easy access to surveys such as through QR codes or using youth-friendly platforms such as SurveyMonkey and Google Forms can increase survey uptake. Other accessible options such as phone support for surveys can enable youth who have disabilities or injuries to participate. Youth can be offered an incentive in the form of a chance to win a prize after completing both the pre- and post-survey. Determining reach and engagement numbers, conducting focus groups and observing behaviours can be other ways to evaluate effectiveness.

Having youth lead different aspects of evaluations with support from professionals can foster strong youth partnerships while enabling them to build skills, become invested in road safety and see positive change. Youth can participate in youth-friendly tool development, data collection, data analysis, brainstorming around youth engagement strategies, creating a final report and more. Hiring young co-op students can also be a way to integrate youth into the process while instilling an interest in road safety.

## YOUTH COMMUNICATION

*"…we try to use innovative ways to send road safety messages to youth because with youth, you cannot talk about statistics and give advanced information. This will not draw their attention."*
**– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 9**

This area of focus looks at effective strategies when communicating directly with youth about road safety through traditional, digital and social media. Youth were asked about what kind of road safety content, resources, advertisements and more catch their eye, what they like and don't like, and what kind of messaging is likely to resonate with them in the long-term and potentially change their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours toward road safety and driving behaviour. Both youth and experts expressed the need to consistently consult and get feedback from youth on the ways they like to be communicated with when it comes to road safety information and messaging. Youth participants especially felt that organizations don't understand the youth audience and their attempts to be relevant and relatable to young people can often result in the opposite of the intended impact, inducing "cringe" and skepticism within young people.

### Recommendations

- Co-design and test drive messaging with representative youth
- Stay up to date on youth social and digital media preferences and practices
- Use social marketing strategies that resonate with youth
- Use storytelling to instill empathy and change youth attitudes

### Co-design and test drive messaging with representative youth

*"A lot of advertisements try to relate with teens but end up doing the very opposite. They try to replicate common teen trends but end up butchering them to the point where it is cringe and the target audience will simply run away at the sight of the advertisement."*
**– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER**

It is important to have messaging that is relevant and appealing to youth to raise awareness, equip young people with the appropriate knowledge and skills and promote behaviour change. Youth like content that is factual and conducive to learning but is presented in creative and fun ways. Co-designing road safety messaging with young people can ensure this and maximize the impact an organization can have with their youth audience. Youth are in tune to the latest trends, how other young people use platforms and the credible ways of communicating with other youth.

There isn't a correct way to co-design and test drive with youth. The co-design process can be guided by social marketing and engagement strategies and models such as the User Centered Design Approach (Dwivedi, Upadhyay & Tripathi, 2012) and Community-Based System Dynamics (Hovmand, 2016). Youth can be engaged in co-designing and testing road safety messages in multiple ways including focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Please refer to Guiding Principle: Meaningful Youth Engagement for general guidelines for engaging youth in co-designing and test-driving road safety messaging.

Many of the interviewed experts expressed that there is a lack of prioritization in messaging around road safety issues that are considered common sense, such as driving under the influence of alcohol, compared to previous generations. Organizations should not assume that youth have the knowledge and skills to prevent impaired driving because previous generations were heavily exposed to messaging around it. Co-designing and test-driving messaging with representative youth can be a way to gauge what youth do and don't know about road safety issues and driving behaviour.

## Stay up to date on youth social and digital media preferences and practices

*"You want to try to be different from what is currently being used. Try to be on the forefront of the advertisement strategies. It is not about adopting upcoming marketing trends – it is about inventing new trends. Sometimes this will fail, sometimes it will succeed. But it is worth it."*

**– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER**

Young people's preferences and frequency of social media use, their preferences of who they receive health and road safety information from and the formats that they prefer to receive information is ever changing. Directly asking youth what their preferences are would be the best way to ensure that organizations reach diverse youth with road safety messaging.

Young people prefer social media platforms that give them the most autonomy. Currently, young people are more likely to use Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat on a daily or weekly basis instead of Twitter and Facebook. In fact, according to the National Youth Road Safety Survey, 50 per cent of young people don't use Twitter at all and 36.7 per cent of young people don't use Facebook at all. Other social media platforms popular with young people include Reddit, Discord and BeReal. Instagram, YouTube and TikTok are the top three social media platforms for respondents to find health and safety information. Outside of social media, most young people find health and safety information from schools, websites, traditional media such as television, radio, newspapers, and in healthcare settings.

Youth prefer more interactive and immediate communication (Michel et al., 2019). Social interaction, meaningful activities, learning new skills and knowledge and prizes or free promotional materials are factors that promote youth engagement on social media (Marie Creamer, Hughes, & Snow, 2020). Youth tend to be passive consumers of content and are more likely to interact using clicks and likes but more hesitant to comment, share posts or independently post user-generated content. Engagement with social media content comes down to online identity management and youth are likely to engage with content and endorse messaging if

it is in line with their personal brand. Low-effort engagement, such as dropping an emoji in the comments to indicate endorsement of messaging, can also be effective in getting some engagement from youth and increasing reach of the message (Guo et al., 2020). Easy access to information can also be an effective strategy to increase youth engagement with content, such as swipe-up ads and links in Snapchat and Instagram.

## Use social marketing strategies that resonate with youth

*"Lots [of ads] are melodramatic and don't understand the audience … companies and governments don't understand the young audience."*

**– PEER INTERVIEW**

Social marketing uses commercial marketing strategies to promote better outcomes of individuals and society through behaviour change (National Social Marketing Centre, 2022). It is important to understand the youth audience to determine accurately and adequately what is likely to hold their attention. Youth were asked about the characteristics of road safety messaging (through advertisements and public service announcements) that they liked and did not like. These characteristics can be used to create more effective messaging that can lead to behaviour change or other desired outcomes:

- Messaging that uses humour and youth trends – such as using puns, double entendres and pop culture references
  - Example: York Regional Police Twitter
- Messaging that accurately depicts youth and youth trends – stereotypical, forced and clichéd depictions can lose young people's interest quickly and can lead to decreased credibility
- Messaging that evokes emotions, such as stories of survivors of road crashes, showing probable scenarios with consequences and empowering youth to engage in safer driving behaviours
- Messaging that requires minimal effort to understand – the message is clear from the get-go, it is short and brief, uses easy-to-understand statistics and uses images over text
- Messaging that instills relatability – this can look like incorporating actual, diverse youth, targeting

subgroups of youth, and depicting scenarios and events that are relevant to youth e.g., prom

- Elements that immediately capture attention – this can include using big, bold letters, loud noises and music
- Catchy slogans that are easy to remember and stick with youth
    - Example: "Driving high is a DUI" from Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI)
- Repeated exposure to messaging across different platforms, including social media, radio, television, billboards and website ads

Content that young people are likely to share with their peers or to the public include content that is relatable, funny, interesting, provides effective solutions or life hacks and content that others have not seen yet. Social marketing should also be done in a way that allows young people to reflect on the messaging. Challenging self-beliefs through education, thinking about the consequences of unsafe driving on the things they value in life, encouraging them to put themselves in others' shoes and think about how they would act in various road safety scenarios are all strategies to enable self-reflection in young people.

Consistency and follow up of road safety messaging is also important to reinforce information in youth and potentially instill interest and importance in safe driving behaviour and road safety. Some ways to reinforce messaging include:

- Encourage young people to follow social media platforms that have content on road safety
- Share useful swag (e.g., taxi coupons, earbud holders, first aid kits) that have road safety information and links for resources
- Encourage and provide guidelines to teachers to have conversations with their students following in-school programming
- Provide information on how youth can join committees, school clubs and ambassadorships related to road safety

There was mixed reception to fear-based messaging that uses shocking and even graphic imagery in road safety messages targeted toward youth in order to "scare" them into not engaging in unsafe driving behaviour. Some youth were receptive to it and believed that it can be an effective way to change driving behaviour as youth who are old enough to drive are old enough to watch content that depicts the consequences of unsafe driving. Other youth as well as experts believe that it can be traumatic to some youth and it is often only effective in the short term (Koehler et al., 2022).

According to the literature, extreme fear or scare tactics can only be effective if young people believe that consequences of unsafe driving behaviour is likely to happen to them and they have the power to prevent these consequences. Extreme fear and scare tactics can result in negative outcomes if not done carefully. Younger and male audiences are also more difficult to influence using fear-based campaigns and the effects are often short lived (Robertson & Pashley, 2015; National Youth Leadership Council, 2016). Given mixed reception to fear-based messaging, using fear-based messaging to engage young people is not recommended.

## Use storytelling to instill empathy and change youth attitudes

*"I am more sensitized to seeing real-life damages than cartoons on a screen. A single story with which people empathize is an easier way of 'putting them in someone else's shoe' so that they understand how they personally can create damage and pain by behaving recklessly."*
**– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER**

One of the biggest recurring themes is the effectiveness of personal stories of road safety consequences on youth's attitude and perceptions of road safety. Youth have indicated that seeing and hearing real-life accounts of those who have been impacted by unsafe driving behaviour as a driver, passenger, family member, first responder and others hold their interest and allow them to reflect upon how the dangers of unsafe driving connect to them and others in their lives.

According to the National Youth Road Safety Survey, the biggest factor that would make young people care about an issue is a personal connection to it: specifically, if it has significant impacts or consequences for themselves, family and friends, people of the same age or ethnicity, and potentially

impacting their communities. Similarly, young people care about issues that align with their personal morals, values and interests.

Ideally, personal stories used for raising awareness of road safety issues should provide an illustration of the consequences of unsafe driving behaviour, such as physical injuries and disabilities, the psychological toll and the negative financial outcomes. Many young people have indicated that stories by survivors and impacted individuals who are similar in demographic factors to them, especially those in the same age group, are likely to instill a greater sense of relatability and empathy.



## YOUTH OUTREACH

*"I think the most effective way to help other people drive more safely is to drive as a good role model. Typically, young drivers will imitate what they see, either as a passenger from their parents and friends or from other drivers they share the road with. We can also raise awareness by showing the consequences of ignoring road safety."*

**– PEER INTERVIEW**

This area of focus looks at who influences youth and how to reach youth through these influencers.

Youth knowledge, attitude and behaviour are influenced by those in their networks due to their status, perceived power and trustworthiness. These groups can be an effective delivery mechanism to deliver road safety messaging to youth and also lead by example when it comes to driving behaviour. According to the National Youth Road Safety Survey, young people's driving behaviours are most likely to be influenced by peers, parents, school/educators

and experts. Siblings and celebrities/influencers were reported to be the least likely to influence driving behaviour. Partnering with those in young people's networks to deliver road safety messaging can result in increased receptiveness toward the messaging and increased likelihood of engaging in safer driving behaviour. Regardless of who stakeholders partner with, youth still want to validate messages for accuracy and will look for links to trusted websites and logos from official and expert sources (O'Brien et al., 2016).

### Recommendations

- Prioritize peer-to-peer communication and education
- Train parents to provide accurate and timely road safety information
- Use schools and educators as delivery mechanisms
- Collaborate with experts and credible organizations
- Rethink the use of social media influencers

### Prioritize peer-to-peer communication and education

*"Seeing my friends drive safely reinforces my good driving habits and seeing many of my friends participate in safe driving (such as not driving under the influence) makes me (or would make me) feel guilty or hesitant to participate in an unsafe driving habit they do not commit."*
**– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER**

Other youth are one of the biggest influencers on youth and peer influence can be both a risk factor and protective factor for young drivers. Action by peers was a major theme that was mentioned across all data collection activities as a potentially effective youth-led solution. Organizations may not be able to reach all youth in their target audience directly but they may be able to reach peers in youth's peer groups who can have an influence on others, creating indirect impact.

Peer-to-peer communication can look like conversations within peer groups. Having youth demonstrate an investment in the issue of unsafe driving behaviour within their peer groups can

encourage their friends to also care about the issue. Conversations between peers within informal settings can revolve around consequences of unsafe driving behaviour on themselves and their peers, and can include appropriate ways to call out unsafe driving behaviour such as positive peer pressure, strategies to limit or prevent the need to engage in risky driving behaviour, what to do in difficult road safety scenarios and the influence of peer pressure on driving behaviour. Peers can also lead by example and model safe driving behaviour to other peers. Many youth indicated that they are more aware and mindful of their own driving skills when they see a peer or family members driving safely.

One barrier to promoting conversations within peer groups can be the desire to maintain social status and friendships. Speaking up about road safety and risky driving behaviour among peer groups can potentially jeopardize this and make youth uncomfortable bringing it up with their peers. Furthermore, reliance on mobile devices for a multitude of functions, including staying connected with friends, can further demotivate youth to talk to their peers about the dangers of distracted driving. Enabling young people to practise skills needed to engage and educate their peers about road safety and driving behaviour outside of a driving context, such as through assertiveness training, can be effective in promoting behaviour change within peer groups and shifting driving culture to one that is safer.

Peer-to-peer education can also look like road safety messages created and delivered by young people, for young people. This can lead to increased buy-in and message believability due to credibility of young people within their peer groups. Peers can share their road safety experiences, problems they've encountered and how they've resolved it, how to self-monitor for safe driving behaviour, strategies to overcome boredom while driving and how drivers can reduce peer pressure effects on their driving behaviour. This can be done in a variety of effective ways such as short videos distributed on video-sharing platforms such as TikTok, in-class presentations and facilitated discussions between different youth groups. Young people who are more likely to influence other young people share certain characteristics and leveraging the influence and

buy-in of these key youth leaders can be effective in reaching subgroups of youth:

- Slightly older youth e.g., those aged 14 and 15 are more likely to listen to and be influenced by those aged 17 and 18.
- Youth who are the gatekeepers of social status within their schools; these are the students that other students look up to. They may hold a position within a school or community that commands respect
- Near peers who are youth who are not in the same life stage but are close in age to the target audience and also have an expertise that commands respect e.g., medical or nursing students, or youth who have aged out of a program and have mentorship capacity

Peer crowd targeting can also be another way to reach subgroups of young people who are difficult to reach, and often underserved, through more traditional methods. This strategy uses tailored messaging targeted toward subgroups of youth who share interests, behaviours, norms and values. Using peers who are considered local influencers and can have local impact can also be effective in spreading road safety messaging through peer networks, on their personal social media platforms and at local events.

### Train parents to provide accurate and timely road safety information

*"When I took my driver training and learned how to navigate [roundabouts] then went home to my parents they were just like, 'yeah, we have no idea.' In certain circumstances like that if your parents are the ones teaching you how to drive, I think you missed out on a lot of those safety aspects of training that could truly impact the future."*

**– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER**

In the National Youth Road Safety Survey, youth reported that parents have the most influence on driving behaviour. Young people who don't receive formal driver education through driving school are often taught by parents, caregivers, or another older family member. Young people also look to their parents to model driving behaviour when their

parents are driving. However, there was consensus by both youth, and the experts interviewed, that parents are often not imparting accurate and timely information to their children and some elements of driver education are not taught by parents due to parents' lack of knowledge or busy schedules. Parents may also engage in unsafe driving behaviour and habits themselves, which their children may emulate. These gaps in knowledge can have generational impact on driving skill level.

Experts suggest better training for parents to communicate proper road safety information to their children, have appropriate conversations about safe driving and its importance and improving their own driving skills and knowledge can be effective in getting young people to care about road safety and change their driving behaviour. Parents should ideally have conversations about safe driving early and frequently with their children and must be committed to overseeing their children's driving practices, setting expectations with them and withholding driving privileges if necessary (Scott-Parker et al, 2016; Shults, et al., 2016).

### Use schools and educators as delivery mechanisms

*"Sometimes [road safety programming] can be fantastic with an educator, if you have a really good one. They can share a story and it's wonderful for the students because they get to see their teacher engaging with the program in a positive way and even sharing a personal story. I've had teachers share stories of driving high, someone they grew up with that had been injured from a cannabis-impaired driving collision and things like that, then it's really valuable."*
**– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 1**

School-based road safety programming can be effective in reaching and engaging a large youth audience. Programming can be incorporated into general school assemblies, within courses or curricula, and through training workshops with educators who can deliver the programming. Organizations should work with educators to determine the needs of their students, how their students might be most receptive to receiving information, questions their students have about

road safety and driving behaviour and tailor messaging and programming accordingly.

Educators such as teachers and coaches can positively contribute to the road safety conversation with youth by sharing stories of their experiences, or the experiences of someone they know, with unsafe driving behaviour. It is imperative that educators are provided with resources with guidelines on how to tell their stories to complement factual information on road safety. A couple of experts have indicated that educators can act as a barrier if they provide inaccurate or irrelevant information to their students.

Driving schools are another avenue where road safety messaging and resources can be disseminated. Some youth acknowledge that driving school was the best place to learn road safety information as well as ask questions they had. However, many of the interviewed experts and youth indicate that not all driving schools are equal as some are unable to teach all the necessary driving skills or knowledge or they often teach to the test, resulting in knowledge and skill gaps in young people. Partnering with driving schools can be effective in reaching a large youth audience with the most up-to-date and youth-friendly road safety information.

### Collaborate with experts and credible organizations

*"I'd probably go to a government website like the SAAQ. If I want factual information about health and safety, I often check Health Canada's website. I trust their stuff to be factual and unbiased."*
**– PEER INTERVIEW**

Health and safety organizations are one of the most preferred sources for health and safety information followed by healthcare professionals and then parents and caregivers. This can be interpreted that young people are most likely to seek information from individuals they consider trusted adults. While most youth indicated they don't seek out road safety information voluntarily, they said they would turn to government websites, public provincial auto insurance organizations' websites (e.g., Manitoba Public Insurance and Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec), and peer-reviewed research if they were required to find accurate road safety information. If youth did not know where to go for road safety information, they would use search

engines such as Google to find information from the top few results.

There was some criticism from both youth and experts that information often found on government websites is difficult to navigate or does not engage youth. Youth also don't go seeking this information unless absolutely necessary, such as when they are in the process of getting their driver's licence. Delivering road safety information in a way that engages youth and taking the information to youth-centred platforms can be more effective. Organizations are encouraged to co-develop road safety resources with youth in order to get relevant, engaging information about road safety and driving behaviour to youth, rather than expecting them to seek out the information themselves.

### Rethink the use of social media influencers

*"The best influencers are those that already care about an issue and do content without being paid for it. It seems more authentic than if they do a promotional post. As long as the stuff they're promoting is in line with what they already care about, I don't mind engaging or looking at the post."*

– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER

According to the National Youth Road Safety Survey, celebrities and influencers were least likely to influence youth driving behaviour, with more than 75 per cent of respondents indicating that they have absolutely no influence. This is because road safety is a topic that is rarely seen addressed by celebrities and influencers but also, youth have developed a healthy sense of skepticism toward social media influencers and celebrities delivering health and safety messaging, especially when that is not their usual content. Some youth believe that influencers prioritize fame and money and, as such, their credibility and accuracy of the information they provide are questionable. Furthermore, once young people see "paid partnership" on content, they are susceptible to skip it as they believe it is not genuine content.

However, social media influencers still have a degree of influence over some youth and strategic partnerships can be useful in reaching subgroups of

youth with road safety messaging. There are certain types of social media content and influencers that youth like. This includes comedians, experts in their fields, edutainers (i.e., content creators who educate on a topic in a creative way), true crime content creators, meme pages and secondary and post-secondary school pages.

It is recommended to partner with influencers who already have an interest in road safety, have been personally impacted by unsafe driving behaviour or who have content that touches on road safety in a funny but safe way. Another recommendation is to have influencers collaborate with road safety experts to add legitimacy to their messaging. Similarly, seeking out experts who have a large following and create youth-appropriate content can also reach some subgroups of youth. Using influencers as a strategy to deliver road safety messaging and information can result in positive attitudinal change among youth if done strategically.



### YOUTH CAPACITY-BUILDING

*"Education is knowledge and knowledge is power so, without learning about the risks of reckless driving, people won't know the extent of damage they would cause if they drove recklessly. This also extends to others factors in reckless driving like substance use, drunk driving, distracted driving."*

– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER

This area of focus looks at common road safety knowledge and skill gaps among youth and examples of effective strategies to address these gaps.

Beliefs and risk perception have a significant impact on whether young people will engage in risky

driving behaviour. There is a disconnect between what youth think safe driving is and what it actually is. Furthermore, youth have different attitudes and ideas of perceived risk toward different types of unsafe driving behaviour (Gauld, et al., 2017). From the National Youth Road Safety Survey, almost 80 per cent of respondents indicated that they consider themselves as average, above average or excellent drivers. Many of the interviewed and surveyed youth believe that being a good, safe driver means avoiding and not experiencing a collision even if engaging in unsafe driving behaviour. For example, many of the youth surveyed and interviewed openly admit to engaging in texting and driving and speeding but still rated themselves very highly in terms of whether they are a good driver as they have received their licence and have not experienced the consequences of their unsafe driving behaviour.

There is a need to equip young people with strategies to prepare them for safe driving and prevent them from engaging in unsafe driving behaviour in addition to strategies to help young people safely avoid a collision. Messages should emphasize recommended behaviour in terms of its benefits, feasibility and how to demonstrate the behaviour under different circumstances. In addition to develop youth driving competence and confidence, encouraging youth to have compassion for other road users, as well as being mindful of areas of self-improvement including self-awareness, self-discipline and patience, are also important for road safety. Capacity-building is ultimately important to improving youth empowerment and wellbeing.

Based on the data collected, young people have many questions about road safety and there is a distinct lack of driver education and maintenance of driving skill and knowledge after licensure. Most young people are also aware of the knowledge and skill gaps they have when it comes to road safety and driving behaviour. Road safety and driving behaviour topics that young people have indicated they lack knowledge on include vaping and driving, drowsy driving, regional road rules, driving under different road conditions, vehicle handling, vehicle maintenance and sharing the road with other users.

One of the biggest road-safety-related knowledge gaps that youth have is the impact of cannabis on driving ability. Due to the fairly recent legalization of cannabis use in Canada, there is limited research on its effects on youth driving ability and mixed results from available research. There is a common misperception among youth who use cannabis and drive that it's a significantly safer choice than alcohol and it enables them to be better drivers i.e., more focused and careful. Changing trends in cannabis use and culture also make this a complicated but much-needed road safety topic on which to educate youth.

Capacity-building can also start younger than adolescence. Age-appropriate programming to raise awareness of road safety issues and unsafe driving consequences can lead to developing good driving habits from an earlier age than 15. An example provided by one of the experts interviewed is the SmartWheels Program from Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Canada.

### Recommendations

- Conduct a needs assessment to understand what youth need to become better drivers
- Increase and reinforce gaps in road safety knowledge and skill through a variety of mediums
- Provide in-person and virtual opportunities to practise skills that promote safe driving
- Incentivize youth to care about road safety and engage in safe driving behaviour

### Conduct a needs assessment to understand what youth need to become better drivers

*"The key [to] success for this, to mobilize youth globally or even locally, is to know what their needs are. We work hard on identifying the needs of young people and we want to make sure that all our programs, all the projects are addressing these needs."*
– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 11

A needs assessment done for youth, by youth can help organizations determine gaps in road safety knowledge and skills among youth as well as understand youth perspectives on road safety. This can be done by surveys, having an open forum for youth to put forth questions they have about driving and road safety, skills questionnaires and facilitated peer-to-peer conversations. Based on the

peer interviews conducted for this project, youth are very in tune to gaps in youth driving knowledge and skills as well as road safety improvements needed in their neighbourhoods and communities. Determining young peoples' needs can ensure that programming and messaging are adequately addressing those needs to facilitate behaviour change and improved road safety.

In keeping with the recommendations of this report, needs assessment questions should be co-developed with youth. However, examples of questions to ask young people in a needs assessment can include the following:

- What would they like to improve about their driving behaviour?
- What questions do they have about road safety and driving behaviour?
- What road safety topics do they want to learn more about?
- What kind of road safety resources are currently lacking for youth?
- How would they like to receive road safety information?

### Increase and reinforce gaps in road safety knowledge and skill through a variety of mediums

*"You can even use art. Some students are really art-enthused so [they can] draw out what [they] think are the repercussions, giving them that freedom of expression. I once had students write out a rap song about it and that was so cool."*
**– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 1**

There are common characteristics of effective programming that engage young people. Programming should be interactive and fun, and in comfortable spaces that include an approachable and relatable facilitator. Videos, infographics and in-person presentations are the most popular formats for receiving road safety information for youth. Videos can provide information in a fun, engaging and accurate way. It can also be a helpful tool to visually show young people the consequences of unsafe driving behaviour.

There are a variety of strategies to use in in-person road safety presentations. Interactive audio dramas that are presented in person, similar to those done by

MADD Canada, can also be an immersive experience for young people due to the lack of visuals. Drama and theatre-based programming where students can act out scenarios of the consequences of different stages of risky driving can also enable them to visualize and experience consequences without engaging in the unsafe driving behaviour. Other arts-based programming such as painting a mural, creating crafts and photography can make road safety more accessible and engaging for young people.

Youth have also expressed that organizations should not underestimate the effectiveness of traditional methods to deliver road safety messages. This includes mailing pamphlets with lettering and visuals that catch young people's attention and encourage them to engage with it; billboards and signs near waiting areas such as bus stops and train stations; and canvassing on the street. Young people appreciate the personal aspect of these kinds of outreach methods, which can contrast the often-impersonal aspect of modern social and digital media marketing. Use of traditional media, such as through television and radio ads, is also important to reach youth who may not have social media accounts or are unable to access social media.

### Provide in-person and virtual opportunities to enhance skills that promote safe driving

*"What is more cost effective for municipalities: providing driver training for free or the costs of collisions?"*
**– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER**

A commonly cited cause for high rates of crashes by young drivers is driver inexperience. Driver inexperience can look like decreased knowledge and understanding of road rules, inability to safely navigate through dangerous driving environments and scenarios, and poor vehicle control (Banz, et al., 2019).

Driving schools were mentioned by many as one of the best places to practise skills that promote safe driving and improve road safety. However, not all young people attend driving school for a variety of reasons. This can include the expense of attending driving school, lack of driving-school options in their region and lack of knowledge of the benefits of

driver education. Legislation to make driving school mandatory, bursaries to mitigate or remove the cost of attending driving school and incorporating elements of driving school in the high school curriculum are some solutions that have been put forth to increase accessibility of driver's education. Driver education reform was mentioned by many youth and experts as something that is needed to produce safer young drivers. Current criticisms of driver education include lack of standardization across schools, lack of in-depth instructions needed to prepare young people for a lifetime of driving, lack of incentives for driving school owners and instructors to be good educators and lack of engaging content.

One suggestion to augment the learning in driver education is programs that provide young people with hands-on driving skills in a controlled environment. An example highlighted by one of the interviewed experts is the Ford Driving Skills for Life, an advanced driver education program for teens and new drivers in the United States. This program has a hands-on driver training clinic where drivers are paired with professional instructors in a vehicle on a safe, controlled track to do driving exercises and develop experience in important driving skills such as hazard recognition, vehicle handling, speed management and more. The program also simulates driving distracted and impaired driving so drivers can experience what their driving ability is like under those conditions. Other similar programs include Race Lab's Road Driving Clinic, Tire Rack Street Survival and the Hagerty Driving Academy's Teen Safety and Survival program, all of which are in the United States. These programs can potentially be tailored according to common errors and problem areas exhibited by young drivers.

Telemetric driving apps can sometimes be effective in increasing awareness of driving behaviour, especially among high-risk drivers who have a high sensitivity to rewards (Harbeck et al., 2017). However, there is limited research on whether it is effective for long-term behaviour change. Apps may be popular upon launch, but young people may lose interest in using the app long term or they are concerned about the privacy of the information shared through these apps. Some young people are also unaware of the benefits of using telemetric driving apps to get a

cheaper insurance premium. Better promotion of the availability and benefits of telemetric driving apps, adding game elements such as incentives that are appealing to youth, and transparency of how the information collected from these apps will be used by insurance companies, may lead to more young drivers using the app and engage in safer driving. Similarly, educating youth on how driving behaviour impacts insurance premiums can incentivize them to drive safer.

A significant theme raised by most youth and experts interviewed for this project is that young people are unaware or ignorant of the consequences of unsafe driving behaviour and that this contributes to their willingness to engage in unsafe driving. Factors that contribute to this in young people include overconfidence, lack of experience, a brain that is not fully developed and a preconceived label by society of young people as reckless drivers. Therefore, capacity-building should also focus on improve young people's knowledge of the consequences of unsafe driving. Increased knowledge about the dangers of unsafe driving can contribute to young people holding themselves and each other accountable when engaging in unsafe driving behaviour.

Virtual reality (VR) and interactive software can be leveraged to show young people the consequences of unsafe driving without putting them in a dangerous situation. An example of this is the SmartWheels program by MADD Canada, targeted to Grade 4 to 6 students and usig a recreational vehicle fitted with VR technology to simulate impaired-driving situations. Through VR headsets, students get a firsthand experience of what it is like to drive impaired, including the cognitive sensations associated with being impaired and the resulting consequences of impaired driving. The program also educates students on how to intervene when people they know get behind the wheel while impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Another example highlighted by one of the interviewed experts is Intoxiclock, a software that visually shows the impact of alcohol consumption and factors such as gender, weight, alcohol consumption patterns on blood alcohol concentration and level of intoxication. Many, including young

people, underestimate how long it takes until their blood alcohol concentration returns to within legal limits. This tool can be used to accurately show youth how long they will be impaired and the implications that this can have on driving ability.

After two years of online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is debatable whether online courses are an effective and engaging way to build road safety knowledge and skills in youth. Online courses can be an accessible way to get road safety information to young people. Online courses can also enable individualized driver education so youth can focus on skills that they have gaps in. Certain factors must be in place to make such courses attractive to young people. Online courses should be free of charge, stimulating but not intensive on the brain and youth-friendly. They should also be interactive, provide options for engagement, align with personal goals and values and use different mediums such as videos, quizzes and written material. Providing a certificate of completion upon completion of the course or module can incentivize youth to complete the course.

### Incentivize youth to care about road safety and engage in safe driving behaviour

*"As an aside, driving is a privilege that can easily be taken away! Showing that something so amazing like driving can be easily taken away is a good incentive to focus on."*
**– CANADIAN YOUTH ROAD SAFETY COUNCIL MEMBER**

According to the National Youth Road Safety Survey, the biggest motivator for youth to engage in safe driving behaviour is the need to protect themselves and others from harm. While strategies to change driver behaviour should leverage this source of motivation, strategies to target young people's wallets either by gaining or losing money can be an effective strategy to have them care about road safety and engaging in safe driving behaviour. For example, educating young people on the financial costs of getting into a crash, such as costs to fix their car and any other property damage, increase in insurance premiums and healthcare costs due to injuries, can paint a stark image of how much they can lose financially due to unsafe driving behaviour. Driving a car has been indicated as the most

convenient, efficient, accessible and freeing mode of transportation by the majority of youth in this project. The presence of law enforcement has been cited by many youth to be a significant motivator for immediate, safe driving behaviour. Losing their licence or access to a motor vehicle due to recurring unsafe driving behaviour and the subsequent reliance on potentially less accessible and convenient transportation modes can also incentivize young people. For youth, losing their licence and access to a vehicle may seem like a more immediate, more likely and less dramatic consequence than getting injured or losing their life.

Similarly, young people can be rewarded for safe driving or engaging in activities that promote safe driving such as receiving extra credits, entry into a draw for a significant prize, gift cards and lower insurance premiums for completing driver safety courses, attending and engaging road safety webinars and workshops, and demonstrating safe driving behaviour in telemetric apps that measure driving skill. It is important to have achievable incentives that keep youth interested in driving safely and developing the skills to do so.



### YOUTH ADVOCACY

*"We want youth to see where their role [is] because when we talk about safer roads, people think this is the responsibility of the police department. In other countries, they think this is the responsibility of transportation engineers but, in reality, everyone is involved because it's a public health issue."*
**– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 9**

This area of focus looks at areas of road safety advocacy that youth can be engaged in and effective strategies on how to do so.

Experts pointed to the reduction of smoking as a case study on what can be done for road safety with respect to youth advocacy. While organizations and government bodies were involved heavily in reducing smoking rates, a lot of the success can also be attributed to youth talking about the issue with each other and advocating for change within their communities. Youth shifted the culture of smoking cigarettes to something that is considered "uncool."

Youth advocacy can help rebuild the culture around driving behaviour to make being a responsible driver cool and attractive to youth. Involving youth in advocacy for measures that promote safer driving such as changes to road infrastructure, road rules and regulations, driver education and access to public transportation can get youth to start conversations both within their peer groups and demonstrate to others, including their peers, that this is an issue that matters to them. Connecting different youth working on similar projects or areas of focus can also create unified youth voices, which is imperative for changing youth driving culture to one that is safer.

### Recommendations

- Understand what is important to youth
- Develop youth advocacy toolkits and training opportunities to develop important skills for advocacy
- Advocate to have youth at formal decision-making spaces

### Understand what is important to youth

*"We need to change driving culture for young people. It's all about me. We've seen some tragic results as a result of that."*
– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 3

It's important to ensure that youth understand their role and responsibilities within the road safety ecosystem. A significant recurring theme is that youth start to care about road safety once they have a personal connection to it. Young people get concerned about an issue when they see significant impacts or consequences for themselves, family and friends, people of the same age or ethnicity, and

potentially impacting their communities. Connecting road safety to other social issues that youth care about, such as climate change, social inequality, substance use and mental health, can be another way to get youth to care about road safety and how it is interconnected with other aspects of their lives.

Youth have a good sense of the areas of road safety that need improvement in their communities. Youth recognize the need for systemic change in order to have the most impact on road safety and that changing driving behaviour in young people is only a piece of the puzzle. When asked about the areas of concern in youth road safety, youth offered up the following: the need for more biking infrastructure; the need for more speed deterrence measures such as speed bumps and speed cameras; lack of law enforcement presence and surveillance; inaccessibility of driver education; workplace hustle culture as a contributor to unsafe driving; access to breathalyzers; and the need for more robust, affordable, alternative modes of transportation. Examples of advocacy activities include innovation contests, letter-writing campaigns, organizing youth safety town halls, youth-led traffic safety events and creating targeted campaign messages for public awareness. Understanding what youth care about and why they care about certain things can help organizations paint road safety as an important public health issue that needs to be addressed and encourage youth to become advocates for road safety.

There is a need to equip youth with the strategies they can use to avoid driving in a motor vehicle if there is a likelihood of engaging in unsafe driving e.g., impaired driving. The need for affordable and accessible alternative transportation options was a significant theme mentioned by youth as a barrier to safe driving. Youth often feel like there are a lack of affordable or accessible alternative transportation options, forcing them to engage in unsafe driving behaviour such as impaired driving. Additionally, young women report personal safety as a factor that discourages them from using public transportation or ride-sharing services (Robertson & Barrett, 2018). This can also impact safety for youth who are not driving, leading them to be passengers in a vehicle with an impaired driver.

Driving is a preferred option for travel by many youth, especially those who are not in major urban areas, due to its convenience, efficiency and lack of alternative transportation options. Some changes that youth want to see among alternative transportation options include having late-night public transportation available, greater availability of express buses for efficiency, more affordable rideshare or taxis, bike and e-scooter shares in more convenient places, free or low cost for public transportation and improved access to public transport in suburban and rural areas. Empowering youth to advocate for better, sustainable, affordable transportation options is important to provide youth with options that will mitigate their likelihood of unsafe driving.

### Develop youth advocacy toolkits and training opportunities to develop important skills for advocacy

*"A lot of the young people [who] we found, it's important to feel like they're part of something, a lot of them are really concerned about what's happening in their home area. One girl last year had two young people at her school killed in the same year, in separate car incidents, which was just appalling…she was like 'we gotta change this.'"*

– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 3

Beyond just educating youth about the importance of road safety, organizations can go further by training and guiding youth to empower them to carry out independent projects and advocacy activities in road safety according to what is important to them. Reaching out to decision-makers was cited as a daunting task for youth and a lack of knowledge on how to do this can be discouraging for youth. Raising knowledge and capacity is one of the first steps to equip youth with the ability to advocate for safer roads. This can be done through creating and making available toolkits, a collection of resources that would enable youth to learn more about road safety and determine strategies that would enable to them address issues on a local, regional or national scale. Example of toolkit materials include youth-friendly information about road safety issues, planning tools, letter-writing campaign templates, advocacy letter templates, links to further reading, data collection

tools and best practices tip sheets. Development of a youth advocacy toolkit should be developed with youth to ensure relevance and be adaptable across multiple contexts.

Similarly, organizations can empower youth by providing training opportunities to build young people's advocacy knowledge and skills. These training opportunities can be in the form of interactive workshops, webinars, conferences, summits and informal and formal mentorship programs. Skills and knowledge areas that can enhance youth's advocacy ability include, but not limited to, using technology and social media to create change, project management, how to approach funders, goal-setting, building resiliency, networking skills, self-care during advocacy, engaging in interdisciplinary and intergenerational collaborations, and conducting evaluations. Grant funding coupled with in-kind support for youth-led safety projects is another way to provide capacity-building opportunities for youth.

### Advocate for space for youth in formal decision-making spaces

*"For the first time last year, [youth] were mentioned in the Global Plan for the Second Decade of Action for Road Safety and I would say that this is a great moment for government and for youth to push to have a sustainable mechanism and to make sure that there is a young person seated at the decision-making level and they can help shape the policy that focuses on road safety."*

– EXPERT INTERVIEW NO. 9

Experts and young people say that there is a significant need to prioritize and allocate funding to sustain work done in youth road safety. Due to the many concurrently occurring and pressing social issues such as COVID-19 and climate change, sustainability of road safety programming has been challenging for organizations. Having youth at formal decision-making spaces, including in conversations with funders, can help draw attention to road safety issues from the youth perspective and influence strategic directions. Furthermore, it facilitates empowerment in young people when they are shown that their input can create change,

potentially setting the stage for them to be lifelong advocates and sustain efforts in making road safer. Organizations can take it a step further and provide spaces and processes open for youth-led decision-making where organizations operate as supporters and observers of decisions made by youth.

Decision-making spaces should also strive to not only have academically inclined young people and young people who are already connected to decision-makers at the table, but also young people who represent voices that are often excluded and from target populations most negatively impacted by road safety issues.

# Conclusion

There is not an easy fix or solution to the problem of serious injuries and fatalities to youth on our roads. Young people have an important role in preventing the negative consequences of road crashes. Meaningfully engaging youth for the purpose of improving road safety is a significant step toward ensuring that young people are true stakeholders and decision-makers.

Road safety stakeholders are encouraged to use this framework as a tool for unifying youth and road safety stakeholders in a cause that has had and will continue to have a devastating impact on countless lives. While individual behaviour change is an important target to improve youth road safety, a holistic approach that includes targeting systemic factors is needed. Meaningfully engaging and partnering with youth can go a long way in creating the next generation of road safety advocates and continue the momentum and impactful work that countless individuals and organizations in Canada are doing to improve road safety.

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# Appendix A:
## Summary of framework recommendations

### Guiding principles

- Meaningful youth engagement
- Equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility
- Harms reduction lens

### AREA OF FOCUS: Youth partnership

- Integrate youth partnership into strategic plan
- Establish youth advisory committee to co-create and co-lead road safety initiatives
- Work with network of youth ambassadors
- Engage youth in evaluating road safety messages and programs

### AREA OF FOCUS: Youth communication

- Co-design and test drive messaging with representative youth
- Stay up to date on youth social and digital media preferences and practices
- Use social marketing strategies that resonate with youth
- Use storytelling to instill empathy and change youth attitudes

### AREA OF FOCUS: Youth outreach

- Prioritize peer-to-peer communication and education
- Train parents to provide accurate and timely road safety information
- Use schools and educators as delivery mechanisms
- Collaborate with experts and credible organizations
- Rethink the use of social media influencers

### AREA OF FOCUS: Youth capacity-building

- Conduct a needs assessment to understand what youth need to become better drivers
- Increase and reinforce gaps in road safety knowledge and skill through a variety of mediums
- Provide in-person and virtual opportunities to practise skills that promote safe driving
- Incentivize youth to care about road safety and engage in safe driving behaviour

### AREA OF FOCUS: Youth advocacy

- Understand what is important to youth
- Develop youth advocacy toolkits and training opportunities to develop important skills for advocacy
- Advocate to have youth at formal decision-making spaces