



The Students
Commission
Centre of Excellence for
Youth Engagement



YOUTH IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

FEBRUARY 2018

Youth Identity Development, or social identity formation, is quite different for today's young people than previous generations. Concepts such as belonging to a community and opportunities for social interaction are in an entirely different realm than before because of the internet and social media.

This report makes three recommendations to the youth policy related to how the government can support positive youth identity development.



The Youth Identity Development Theme Team

SUMMARY

What is the true impact that social media has on youth identity development? There is no correct uniform answer, although social media can have both positive and negative consequences for the way young people feel and think about themselves. Spaces of belonging are created through social media platforms, but so are isolating spaces of exclusion. When young people feel isolated online, they are likely to extend this feeling in their everyday interaction. We make three recommendations to the federal government's youth policy:

The government should support and initiate online movements such as hashtags and challenges to support positivity and authenticity online.

All teachers should have social media safety and healthy habits training to teach to their students.

More youth spaces should be created in communities to provide an alternative to unhealthy activities that youth may engage in.



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This project has been
made possible in part by the
Government of Canada

Canada



This program is
generously supported
by RBC Foundation.

#CANADA WE WANT

The change we want to see:

Positive and inclusive behavior by adults and young people to promote online and offline belonging. Positive and respectful online relationships which translate to successful offline communication. Personal authenticity online and offline: youth should feel confident and comfortable being themselves.

The way we want to get there (Activities):

Reducing “fear of missing out” by supporting community drug and alcohol free youth centres

The way we want to get there (Activities):

Reducing negative propaganda and body shaming advertisements on social media.

The way we want to get there (Activities):

Spreading hashtags and social media challenges that promote authenticity online as well as positive online behavior.

What we need to get there (Resources):

Funding, trained professionals and spaces that can facilitate youth participation in community activities to reduce engagement in unhealthy behaviour.

The way we want to get there (Resources):

Education in schools that encourages young people to think about what the message is when posting on social media, and making sure it is positive and constructive.

What are the values and the principles to ground our recommendations?

Adults should respect the fact that online interaction is a fact of life for this generation of young people. Simply avoiding going online is out of the question.

What are the values and the principles to ground our recommendations?

Promoting authenticity and honesty among young people to encourage self-acceptance.