To: Interested Parties
From: Global Strategy Group
Date: August 2024
Re: A Better Chicago – Youth Survey Results

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 400 Chicago 10-24-year-olds from July 2 to July 21, 2024. Some questions from this survey also include trend data from a similar online survey of Chicago youth that GSG conducted in August 2023. Findings from the survey(s) are detailed below.
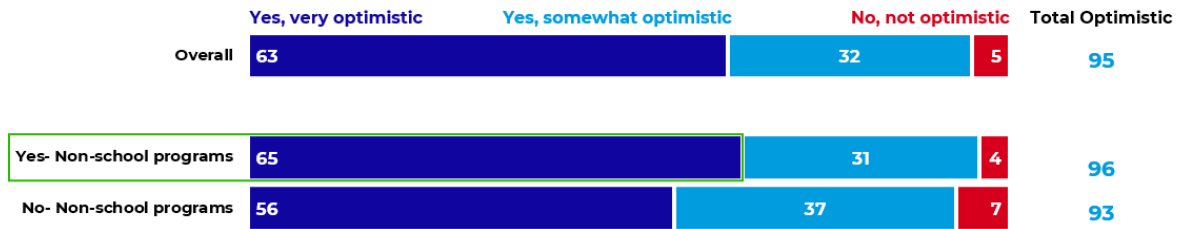
KEY FINDINGS

- **Non-school community-based programs are having a positive impact on Chicago's youth.** Those who participate in community-based programs outside of school are more likely to, (1) have an optimistic outlook on their future, (2) gain important skills that traditional schools do not focus on, and (3) have a plan to pursue a four-year college degree.

- **However, the needs of Chicago youth are not yet met and there is an overwhelming desire among youth to see an expansion of community-based programs.** Youth cite that they struggle to find opportunities to learn "real life skills," and one-on-one mentoring. At the same time, non-school community-based programs are seen as better equipped to help provide this to youth, though many don't have the access they need. For those who do participate in programs outside of school, pluralities mostly participate only after school, but a majority of youth want to be able to participate both after school and on weekends.

- **Mental health and well-being is a major problem for Chicago youth that continues to grow.** Last August, 92% of youth cited mental health and well-being as a problem experienced by people their age – 71% of whom said it was a *major* problem. Today those numbers are higher, (94% problem, 74% major problem) and youth have become more critical of their community's response to providing services for mental health. And while more than 9 in 10 believe mental health and well-being is a problem for people their age today, a majority of youth have never received mental health services themselves. Among those who have not received mental health and well-being services, a third wish they had.

- **Community violence is ongoing and apparent to Chicago youth – and many see community programs as a solution that helps their peers avoid violence.** A majority of youth say they have witnessed community violence – with a quarter of those who have witnessed violence saying they see it weekly. For youth, the solution to community violence is twofold: Youth across the city specifically call for "more police" which is broadly seen as an effective way to reduce violence. However, when asked what would best keep their peers out of violence, more youth volunteer that staying active and busy (through schools, activities, and community programs) will keep people their age out of violence.

A vast majority of Chicago youth are optimistic about their future, but those who participate in non-school community-based programs are more likely to be optimistic. Youth that have participated or currently participate in non-school programs are 9-points more likely to say they are *very optimistic* about their future (65%) compared to those who do not participate in these programs (56%).
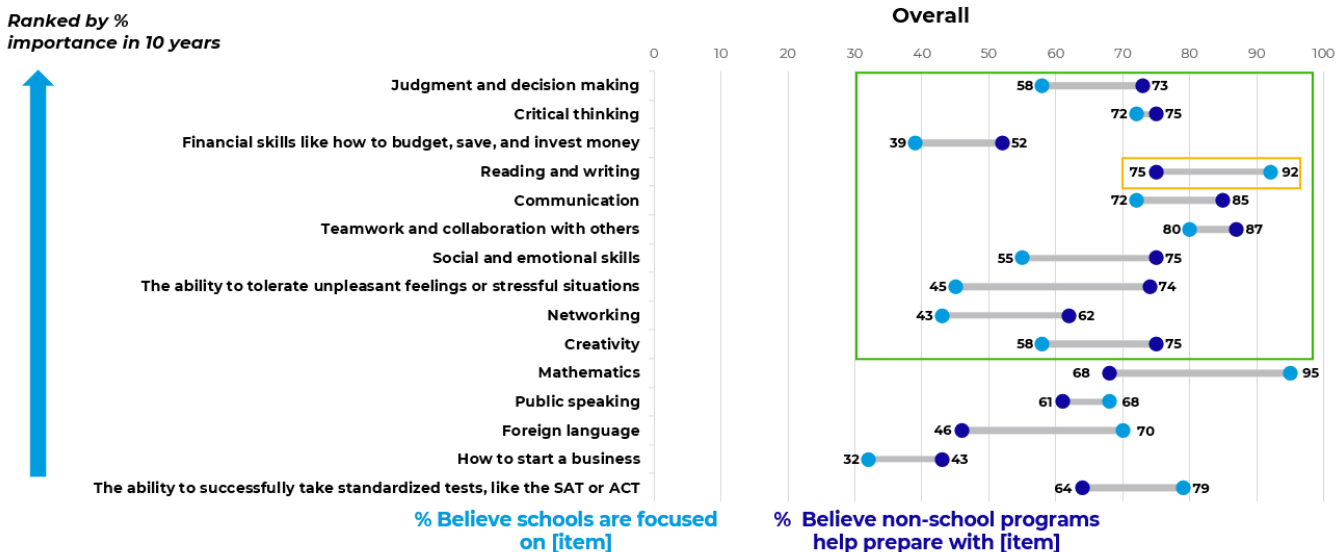
Are you optimistic about your future?

	Yes, very optimistic	Yes, somewhat optimistic	No, not optimistic	Total Optimistic
Overall	63	32	5	95
Yes- Non-school programs	65	31	4	96
No- Non-school programs	56	37	7	93

Note: Participation in non-school programs is self-reported and asks specifically about programs outside of traditional school, such as afterschool programs, summer programs, camp, tutoring, programs that help find colleges, internships, or careers, or other recreational activities organized in their communities. In total, 76% of Chicago youth in our sample qualify as non-school program participants.

One of the major successes from community-based programs is that they are filling a gap: helping youth develop important skills that traditional schools are not focused on. In fact, across the top 10 skills that youth believe will be most important to them as they grow older, non-school community-based programs are given more credit than schools when it comes to helping youth develop those skills. The chart below combines a series of questions, showing a list of skills ranked by importance to youth in 10 years, along with the % who believe schools are focused on those skills (light blue), and the % of non-school program participants who believe non-school programs help prepare them with those skills (purple). <u>With the exception of "reading and writing," across all other top 10 important skills, youth believe non-school programs are more likely to help prepare them for those skills than their schools. This includes critical social-emotional skills that students aren't getting at school.</u>
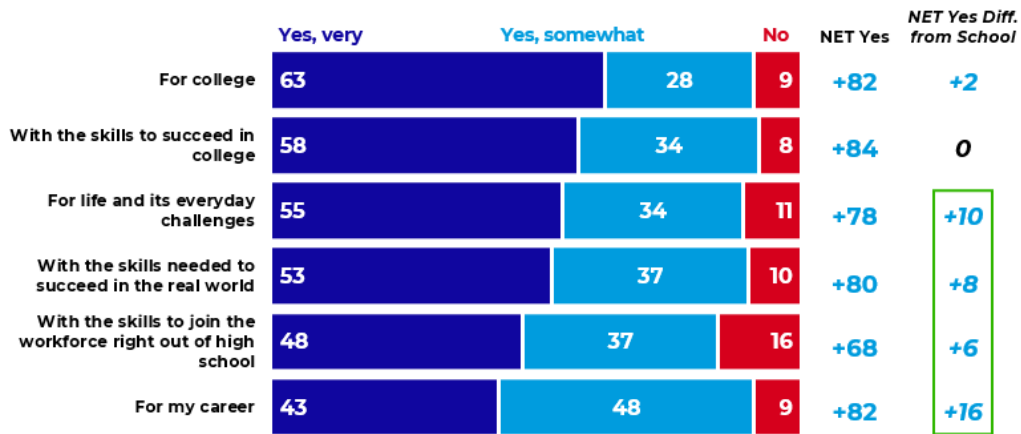
Difference between skills: schools and **[IF PARTICIPANT]** non-school programs

Ranked by % importance in 10 years

Overall

Skill	% Believe schools are focused on [item]	% Believe non-school programs help prepare with [item]
Judgment and decision making	58	73
Critical thinking	72	75
Financial skills like how to budget, save, and invest money	39	52
Reading and writing	75	92
Communication	72	85
Teamwork and collaboration with others	80	87
Social and emotional skills	55	75
The ability to tolerate unpleasant feelings or stressful situations	45	74
Networking	43	62
Creativity	58	75
Mathematics	68	95
Public speaking	61	68
Foreign language	46	70
How to start a business	32	43
The ability to successfully take standardized tests, like the SAT or ACT	64	79

Note: Current or past participation in non-school programs was a qualifying criteria for those asked of non-school programs. Thus, the samples between those asked of schools and non-school programs differ.

Youth give non-school programs more credit than traditional schools when it comes to developing real world skills. When it comes to preparing youth for college and with the skills to succeed in college, traditional schools and non-school programs are seen as equally effective. However, when it comes to other real-world skills, non-school programs are seen as far more helpful in preparing youth.

[IF CURRENT NON-SCHOOL PARTICIPANT] Thinking about the programs you participated in <u>outside of traditional school</u>, do you believe they will or have prepared you in the following areas?
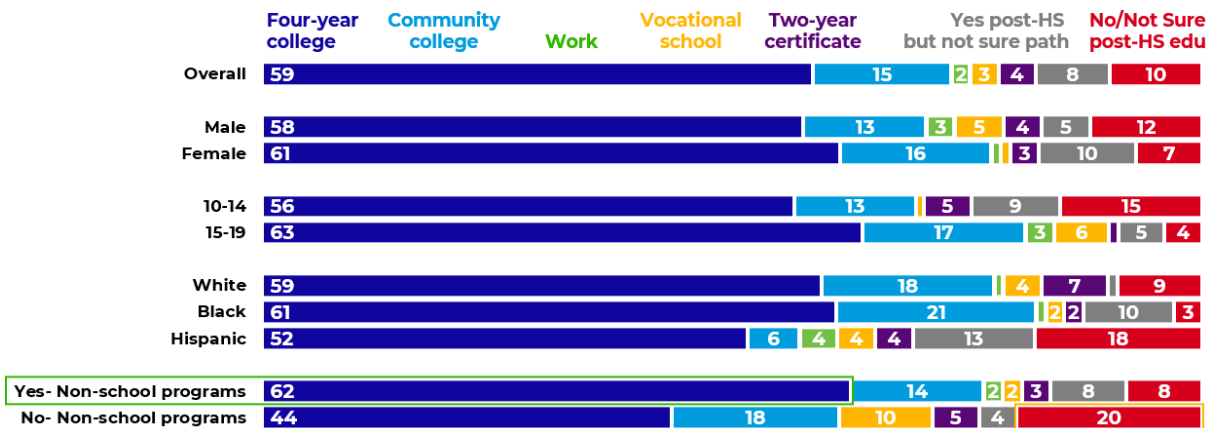
	Yes, very	Yes, somewhat	No	NET Yes	NET Yes Diff. from School
For college	63	28	9	+82	+2
With the skills to succeed in college	58	34	8	+84	0
For life and its everyday challenges	55	34	11	+78	+10
With the skills needed to succeed in the real world	53	37	10	+80	+8
With the skills to join the workforce right out of high school	48	37	16	+68	+6
For my career	43	48	9	+82	+16

As part of this, youth feel traditional schools do not focus enough on social, emotional, and financial skills. In a separate question measuring skills that schools focus on, *social and emotional skills* (55% schools focus on, 94% say will be important), *the ability to tolerate unpleasant feelings or stressful situations* (45% school focus, 93% important), *financial skills like how to budget, save and invest money* (39% school focus, 96% important) show some of the largest gaps in the skills school's ability to address important skills to youth.

Students who participate in non-school programs are more likely to plan to pursue a four-year degree after high school. Across gender, age, and race, a majority of Chicago youth plan to pursue a four-year college degree after high school. Notably, those in non-school programs (62% plan to pursue four-year college) are far more likely to say so, compared to those not active in non-school programs (44%). Further, students not active in non-school programs are twice as likely to say they will not continue post-secondary education or are unsure (20%) compared to youth overall (10%).

- Black and Hispanic youth plan to pursue secondary education at similar rates to white youth, however Black (10% yes but unsure of path) and Hispanic youth (13% yes but unsure of path) are more likely to not know exactly what they want to pursue compared to white youth (1%).

[IF ENROLLED AND 12th OR LOWER] After high school, do you plan to continue your education, such as enrolling in college, vocational school, or other job training programs?

[IF PLAN TO CONTINUE EDU] Which of these are you most likely to pursue right out of high school?

	Four-year college	Community college	Work	Vocational school	Two-year certificate	Yes post-HS but not sure path	No/Not Sure post-HS edu
Overall	59	15	2	3	4	8	10
Male	58	13	3	5	4	5	12
Female	61	16			3	10	7
10-14	56	13		5		9	15
15-19	63	17	3	6		5	4
White	59	18		4	7		9
Black	61	21	2	2		10	3
Hispanic	52	6	4	4	4	13	18
Yes- Non-school programs	62	14	2	2	3	8	8
No- Non-school programs	44	18	10	5	4		20

CHICAGO YOUTH CONTINUE TO WANT TO SEE MORE NON-SCHOOL PROGRAMS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES AND MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THEM TO PARTICIPATE

Those who participate in non-school programs do so regularly, but youth want more opportunities to participate on weekends in particular. 8 in 10 youth who participate in non-school programs do so weekly, with a majority saying they participate mostly after school (59%). When asked when they *would like* to participate there is a 10-point gap between those who also participate on weekends, and those who would like to.

IF NON-SCHOOL PARTICIPANT	Mostly after school	Mostly on weekends / Equally after school & weekends
When do you participate?	59	42
When would ***you like*** to participate?	48	52

Youth of all ages and races overwhelmingly want more programs in their communities that focus on a wide range of skills, mentorship, and support networks. Youth ages 15-19 years-old show higher desire to see more programs aimed at college placement, peer tutoring and mentoring, and recreational programs that offer sports, music, or art. Black and Hispanic youth are more likely than white youth to call for more job training programs – though Black youth also show high desire for recreational programs and tutoring.

	Overall	10-14	15-19	20-24	Wht	Blk	Hisp
			NET MORE				
Programs that provide skills training, internships, and job opportunities	**+82**	+68	**+91**	+86	**+83**	+82	+79
Programs that help students get scholarships, secure financial aid, and apply for colleges	**+82**	+76	**+88**	**+82**	**+82**	+79	**+83**
Programs that build professional and social skills through coaching and mentorship	+79	+72	+88	+79	+71	+81	**+83**
Job training programs	+80	+66	+88	+86	+74	**+83**	**+82**
Classes that teach small business skills	+76	+76	+79	+75	+75	+79	+74
Peer tutoring and mentoring	+69	+62	**+80**	+66	+82	+78	+54
Programs that provide troubled youth with second chances	+72	+67	+79	+73	+75	+75	+72
Programs that offer a place to play sports, music, or make art	+75	+72	**+83**	+71	+71	**+81**	+69
Programs that provide support for people experiencing homelessness	+70	+70	+75	+66	+69	+72	+68
Programs that provide reading and literacy tutoring	+69	+60	+69	+75	+71	**+80**	+61
Academic clubs like honors societies, science, math, or writing clubs	+65	+67	+57	+67	+63	+72	+66
Classes that teach parenting skills	+63	+45	+66	+74	+54	+71	+59

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING CONTINUES TO BE A MAJOR PROBLEM

Chicago youth's concerns about mental health and well-being have only gotten worse since last August. In August 2023, 92% of Chicago youth said that mental health and well-being was a problem people their age were facing, including 71% who said it was a *major* problem. Now, 94% of Chicago youth view it as a problem, with 74% citing it as a major problem. Concerns are especially great with older youth aged 20-24 – 91% consider mental health and well-being a major problem, up 29% from last year.

Subsequently, youth have also become more critical of their community's response and mental health services. Last August, a majority of youth gave their community positive ratings when it came to addressing mental health and well-being issues, with positive views leading by a net of +10 (55% positive / 45% negative). Today, that positive advantage is erased, with youth growing more critical (50% positive, 50% negative) of their community's response to mental health.

Chicago youth also cite many issues related to mental health, including depression, stress, and anxiety, as the biggest problems for people their age. Depression (89% problem, 70% major problem), Stress (92% problem, 70% major problem) and anxiety (92% problem, 69% major problem) are seen as the biggest problems for youth these days. Older youth (ages 20-24) also consider discrimination (96% problem) and drug and alcohol use (93% problem) among the biggest problems their peers face, while younger youth (ages 10-14) are more concerned with bullying (96% problem).

- **These same issues are also considered the largest barrier to regular school attendance.** Though few students report poor attendance in school (78% rarely miss school, 16% sometimes, 6% often), these issues related to mental health are seen as the top reasons for why one would miss school. In fact, a third of youth cite depression and stress as the biggest reasons their peers are missing school, and over a quarter say anxiety, bullying, and drugs and alcohol keep their peers from attending school regularly.

A majority of youth have never received mental health services themselves – and barriers to access likely prevent those who want mental health services from getting it. A third of youth who have not received mental health services say they felt they needed support in mental health and well-being, but never received services.

Youth volunteer their parents as most helpful when dealing with mental health issues, with fewer pointing to school counselors – even those who have used their services. Younger youth (ages 10-19) especially prefer to turn to their parents, while young adults are more likely to view professionals and their closest friends as most helpful. Notably, fewer youth view teachers and school counselors as more helpful than parents, therapists, or close friends. Those who have received mental health services from a school counselor are more likely to believe they are helpful, however, still parents, therapists, and close friends are seen as more helpful.

And if you were experiencing an issue or a problem like the ones you were asked about earlier, who do you think would be the most helpful in helping you through it?

	Aug 23	10-14	15-19	20-24	White	Black	Hisp.	Received mental health services Total	Received mental health services School Counselor
My parents or legal guardian — 34%	35	50	40	16	34	46	26	57	60
A therapist or psychologist — 18	13	9	13	30	19	13	20	58	48
My closest friends or friend group — 18	9	10	17	26	14	10	29	54	50
My sibling[s] or close relative — 12	N/A	14	12	10	13	12	12	34	36
A teacher, school counselor, or coach within the school — 7	N/A	6	11	4	11	7	2	38	45
A trusted adult outside of school, an after-school program, coach, or mentor — 6	N/A	7	2	8	5	6	6	32	31
Police or public safety officer	3	1	2	3	3	2	2	14	13
None of these — 3	3	3	1	3	1	3	4	1	2
Other	2	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	1

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE IS APPARENT TO CHICAGO YOUTH, AND THEY CALL FOR MORE COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS AS A SOLUTION TO HELP THEIR PEERS

Nearly two-thirds of Chicago youth have witnessed community violence, and a quarter say they witness violence weekly. Older youth, Black males, and Hispanic females are most likely to see violence frequently in their communities – over a third of Black males and Hispanic females say they witness violence on a weekly basis.

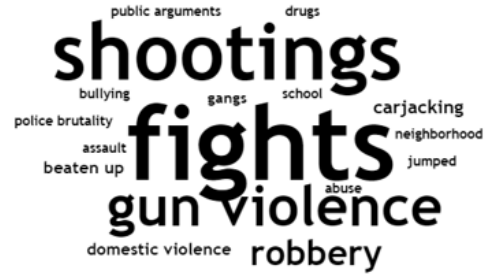Have you ever personally witnessed violence in your community?

	No	Yes
Overall	37	63

[IF WITNESSED]:
Types of violence witnessed

How often do you witness or see violence in your community?

	Has not witnessed community violence	Less than once a month	Once a month	Weekly
Overall	37	22	18	23

Quotes detailing the types of violence youth witness:

- *"All types of fights on the way to school, from random adults in the neighborhood fighting each other, random shootings that occur, and also police brutality."* **– 17, Hispanic male**

- *"I've witnessed shootings, domestic violence, and just people getting into fights."* **– 20, Black male**

- *"Gun violence and domestic abuse, car theft, breaking windows to steal items in the car."* **– 14, Hispanic male**

Chicago youth are looking for a twofold solution: more policing to combat community violence, and more programs and activities to keep their peers out of violence. Youth believe that more police both deters and combats violence, but when asked what prevents their peers from committing violence in the first place, they point to activities that keep them busy, including school, sports, and community programs.

[IF WITNESS COMMUNITY VIOLENCE] What are some things you think would help reduce violence in your community?

"**More police** driving around the neighborhood" – Female, Black, North Chicago

"**More police** and **ban objects that are harmful.**" – Male, Black, South Chicago

"**More law enforcement and programs for young men.**" –Male, Hispanic, West Chicago

What keeps young people in your community from engaging in violence?

"Having **basketball programs** to attend." –Male, Black, South Chicago

"**Keeping busy with outside of school activities that they enjoy**." –Female, Hispanic, North Chicago

"**More active things** to do or **nice places** to hang around." –Female, Black, Central Chicago

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METHODOLOGY

Global Strategy Group conducted an online survey of 400 Chicago 10-24-year-olds from July 2 to July 21, 2024. Census data was used to ensure a sample that is representative of the population. The confidence interval at the 95% confidence level is +/- 4.9%. the confidence intervals on sub-samples is greater.