YOUTH IMPACT SURVEY DATA BRIEFS

WHAT IS THE YOUTH IMPACT SURVEY?

The Children and Youth Planning Table (CYPT) partnered with UNICEF Canada, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation to develop and pilot the Youth Impact Survey (YIS). It was developed to align with the Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being, a framework developed by UNICEF Canada to better understand the lives of children and youth, help track progress for child and youth well-being and guide changes that can be made to help children and youth facing challenges in Canada. The framework includes 125 indicators over multiple dimensions of well-being.

Too often, decisions about children and youth are made without their involvement. The YIS was a chance to learn directly from children and youth in Waterloo Region about their own well-being and their experiences. Results of the survey can be used to inform conversations, decisions, services and programs impacting children and youth in our community.

We worked alongside local children and youth to identify what is important to them—things like how they are feeling, what they do in their free time, and how they feel about school and their community. Launched in July of 2020, children and youth between the ages of 9 and 18 were invited to participate in the YIS pilot to share insights into their own well-being and provide feedback on the survey tool, with just about 300 youth participating.

WHY IS THIS DATA IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW?

The purpose of the Youth Impact Survey Data Brief Series is to highlight key well-being data that was shared from young people in Waterloo Region over the summer of 2020 - during the COVID-19 pandemic. This series will present data across 10 focus areas of child and youth well-being. We hope that this information is helpful to those working and supporting children and youth in our community. The data can help inform the current state of well-being, and can be used in conjunction with additional data and/or as a conversation starter with young people to better understand their specific state of well-being.

WHY DO WE CARE ABOUT A SYSTEM LEVEL VIEW OF WELL-BEING?

The Children and Youth Planning Table is a community-wide partnership that includes service providers, researchers, planning bodies and funders serving children, youth and families in our community. Members share the common vision of "Happy, healthy children and youth- today and tomorrow."

In 2019, the CYPT aligned their shared goals and shared measurement framework with UNICEF Canada's Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being. The YIS is one way the CYPT will gather and collectively understand local child and youth well-being data as it compares to the national picture. When the CYPT, as a collaborative, uses the same data to understand child and youth well-being, look at trends, and make sense of what youth are saying, we can better work together from a shared understanding of well-being. Youth are the experts of their own lives, and hearing from young people first hand about their well-being (e.g. through the YIS) is particularly valuable.

LIMITATIONS

A limitation related to the YIS data and important consideration when reading the Data Briefs is that the YIS was completed in July and August of 2020 - in the midst of a global pandemic. The comparability of the YIS data to non-pandemic data will be impacted, including the comparisons made throughout these Data Briefs to data included in Worlds Apart: Canadian Companion to UNICEF Report Card 16 and UNICEF Canada's Where Does Canada Stand? The Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being 2019 Baseline Report. A further limitation is that most participants completed this survey while not actively attending school (i.e., during the summer break). Responses to questions about school may have been more accurate had they been actively participating in schooling at the time of the survey.

"THANK YOU FOR GIVING YOUTH THE VOICE IN ISSUES WE DO NOT ALWAYS HAVE."

YIS Respondent

Children and Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region

unicef CANADA | ONE YOUTH

Ontario Trillium Foundation / Fondation Trillium de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

CANADIAN Index OF WELLBEING

Children and youth between the ages of 9 and 18 from Waterloo Region, which includes the cities of Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo and townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich, were invited to participate in the YIS. The CYPT members used a combination of direct contact and social media, to invite children and youth to participate in an online survey.

A TOTAL OF 297 YOUTH COMPLETED THE YOUTH IMPACT SURVEY.

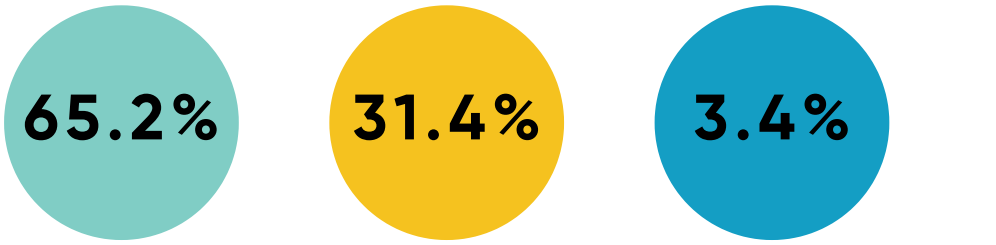
AGE

The majority of respondents (79.5%) who completed the survey were 13 years of age or older. 9 and 11 year olds were the smallest response groups.

Age	Per cent
9	3.5%
10	7.3%
11	3.8%
12	5.9%
13	10.8%
14	17.7%
15	18.1%
16	12.5%
17	15.3%
18	5.2%

GENDER

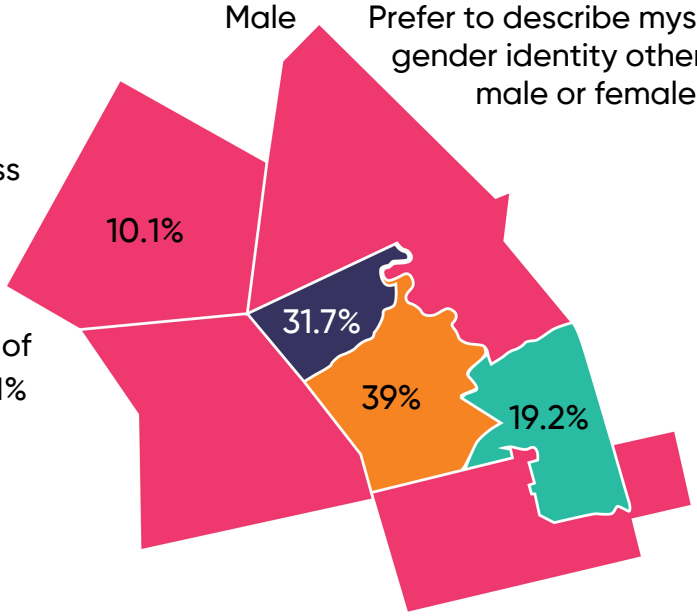
The survey was completed by 65.2% of female identifying respondents which is just over double that of the number of male identifying respondents (31.4%). Another 3.4% of respondents preferred to describe themselves as a gender identity other than male or female.



Female | Male | Prefer to describe myself as a gender identity other than male or female

GEOGRAPHY

Children and youth across Waterloo Region were invited to complete the survey - 89.9% of the respondents lived in one of the three cities, while 10.1% lived in one of the four townships.



COUNTRY OF BIRTH

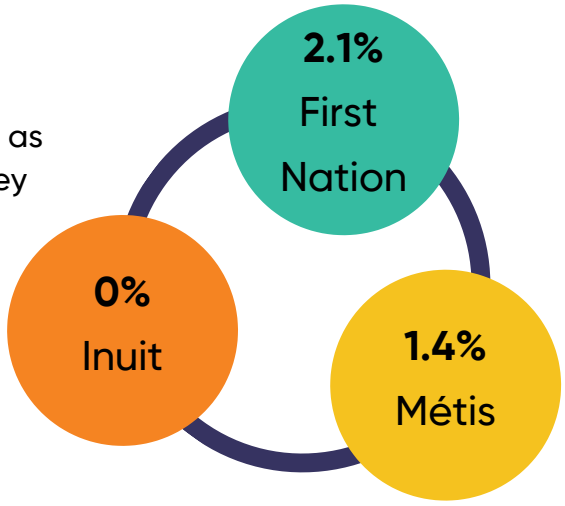
82.4% of respondents were born in Canada and 17.6% of respondents who completed the survey were born outside of Canada.

82.4% Canada | 2.8% India | 2.1% U.S.A | 1.4% Pakistan | 1.4% Syria | 1.0% Ethiopia | 9% Other[1]

1. Data note: There were 26 respondents from other countries, including China, Eritrea, Nigeria, United Arab Emirates and others.

FIRST NATION, MÉTIS, AND INUIT

3.5% of respondents who completed the survey identified as First Nation, Métis or Inuit, an additional 3.5% reported they were not sure or didn't know.



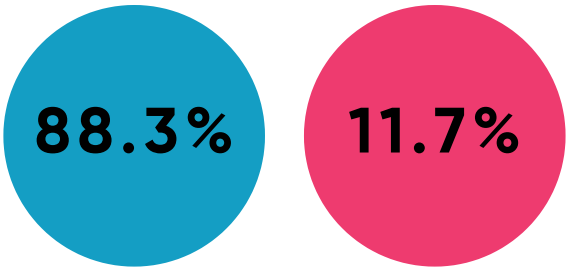
RACIAL BACKGROUND

Racial Background	Per cent[2]
White	62.5%
South Asian	9.3%
East/Southeast Asian	8.3%
Black	6.4%
Middle Eastern	5.1%
Indigenous	2.9%
Latino	2.2%
Another Race[3]	3.2%

The majority of responses (62.5%) for the survey came from youth who reported their racial background as White. The remaining responses (37.5%) were from children and youth reporting South Asian, East/Southeast Asian, Black, Middle Eastern, Indigenous, Latino, or another racial background.

LONG-TERM PHYSICAL OR MENTAL CONDITION

11.7% of respondents noted that they have a long-term physical or mental condition that limits their ability to fully participate in community, school, work, or other activities.

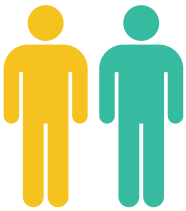


No long-term condition

Long-term condition

HOUSEHOLD TYPE

The majority of respondents (80.9%) were living in two parent/guardian households at the time of the survey, with one parent/guardian homes being the second most common household type among respondents.



Two parents/guardians
80.9%

One parent/guardian
10.8%

Other[4]
8.3%

2. Data note: Per cent of responses, respondents were able to select more than one racial background.
3. Data note: Other racial backgrounds identified by youth included Guyanese, African and mixed.
4. Data note: Other household types include youth living with Extended family; Parents/guardian(s) with other non-related adults sharing; Grandparents or other relative (not parent); Shared time between parents; Single parent and grandparent; and, Friend's family.

WHAT IS BELONGING?

⚠ Where appropriate, national data has been provided for comparison to the YIS data. Please Note: all national data is pre-pandemic and thus, there are limitations in comparability.

UNICEF Canada defines belonging as "feeling loved and supported and having mutually caring and respectful relationships".[5] This love and support can come from many sources including friends, family, teachers, pets, and people in the community. Locally, when we think about belonging for children and youth, we recognize the importance of equity, relationships and attachment, and feeling valued, heard and included.

WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

A sense of belonging among children and youth has positive impacts on health and well-being. We know that children and youth who have a sense of belonging (i.e. a feeling of social and environmental connection) have a greater sense of stability which can help them deal with challenges and uncertainty.[6] Those with a strong sense of belonging tend to be engaged in their community, have social networks, and build relationships with others, reducing feelings of loneliness.[7] The impacts of feeling like you belong have also been linked to life expectancy, with a lack of social connections having negative impacts on your health similar to smoking, obesity, and diabetes.[8] When children build healthy relationships at home, school, with friends and in the community, it contributes to their overall well-being.

"I LIKED THE QUESTIONS BECAUSE THEY WERE BASED ON OUR EVERYDAY LIVES. THOSE QUESTIONS THAT WOULDN'T BE ASKED OF US COMMONLY AND ARE VERY UNIQUE AND NEW. THESE KIND OF QUESTIONS MAKE US THINK THAT WE ARE HERE TO SHARE OUR IDEAS AND OUR VOICES ARE BEING HEARD."

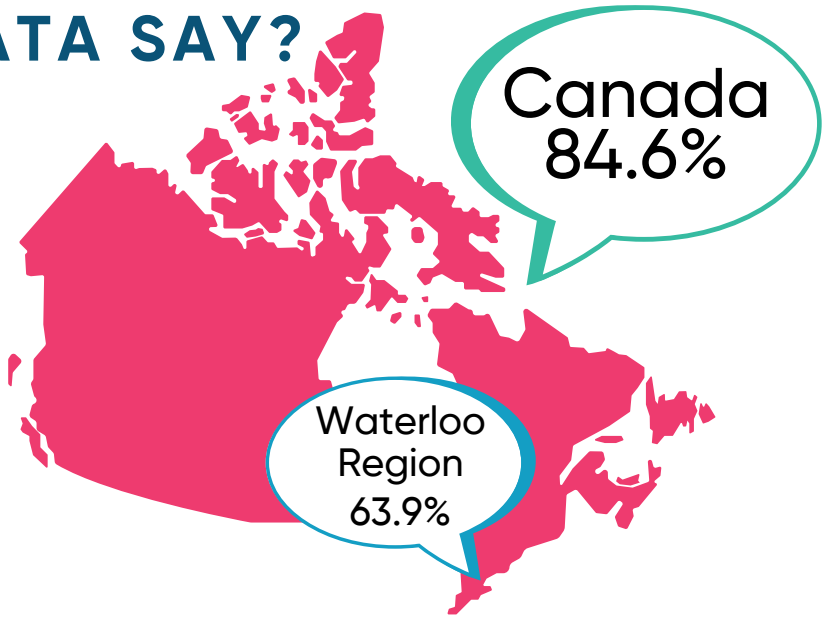
YIS Respondent

5. UNICEF Canada. (2020). Worlds Apart: Canadian Companion to UNICEF Report Card 16: UNICEF Canada, Toronto.
6. Hatala, A.R., Pearl, T. Bird-Nartowhow, K., Judge, A., Sjoblom, E., & Liebenberg, L. (2017). "I Have a Strong Hope for the Future": Time Orientations and Resiliency Among Canadian Indigenous Youth. Qualitative Health Research 2017, Vol. 27(9) 1330–1344.
7. UNICEF Canada (2019). Where Does Canada Stand? The Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being 2019 Baseline Report. UNICEF Canada, Toronto. Available online: https://oneyouth.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/2019-08/2019_Baseline_Report_Canadian_Index_of_Child_and_Youth_Well-being.pdf
8. Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (2017). Connected Communities: Healthier Together. 2017 Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Available online: http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/cmoh_19/cmoh_19.pdf

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

SENSE OF BELONGING

63.9% of YIS respondents reported feeling a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their community. This is below the national data (84.6%) reported by UNICEF Canada.[9]



LONELINESS

Almost three in ten (28.6%) of respondents reported feeling lonely on at least a regular basis.

I feel lonely...

SOCIAL SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The YIS asked children and youth if and how they feel supported by family and friends. For family and friends, support looks like help making decisions, emotional help and support, someone to count on, and someone to talk through problems and share joys with. More respondents of the YIS feel supported by family than friends. Among YIS respondents, 62.3% of youth felt supported by their families, compared to 57.3% of children and youth across Canada observed by UNICEF Canada.[10] Just over 58% (58.6%) of youth who responded to the YIS felt supported by their friends, slightly lower than the 65.9% of children and youth across Canada who felt supported by friends.[11]

62.3% OF YOUTH FELT SUPPORTED BY THEIR FAMILIES.

58.6% OF YOUTH FELT SUPPORTED BY THEIR FRIENDS.

9. UNICEF Canada (2019).
10. UNICEF Canada (2019).
11. UNICEF Canada (2019).

CHILDREN AND YOUTH FEELINGS OF SUPPORT FROM TEACHERS

A school environment, and relationships with teachers, are important to shaping a young person's sense of belonging and well-being.[12]

79.4% OF RESPONDENTS FELT THAT THEIR TEACHERS ACCEPT THEM AS THEY ARE.

73.8% OF RESPONDENTS FELT THAT THEIR TEACHERS CARE ABOUT THEM.

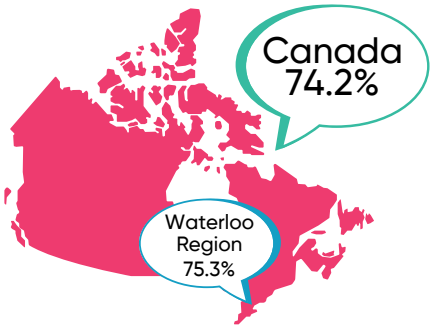
EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION[13]

The YIS asked children and youth about their experiences of discrimintation in the last year. Almost half, (43.8%) of respondents have experienced discrimination in the past year due to characteristics such as physical appearance, sex, and age.

Experiences of discrimination due to...	Per cent
Your physical appearance	21.2%
Your sex	17.5%
Your age	15.8%
Your ethnicity or culture	14.8%
Your race or colour	14.8%
Your religion	10.4%
Your sexual orientation	8.4%
A disability	6.7%
Your gender identity	5.7%
Your language	4.0%

FEELING VALUED, HEARD, AND INCLUDED[14]

One key piece of feeling valued, heard and included, is feeling like you have a voice and someone is listening. When young people feel heard, like their opinions and perspectives matter, there is a stronger sense of connection and inclusion. More than three-quarters, 75.3% of respondents felt that when they speak, someone in their family listens, much like their peers across Canada (74.2%).[15]



73.6% FELT THEY CAN EXPRESS THEMSELVES WITH THEIR FRIENDS.

67.9% FELT THEY CAN EXPRESS THEMSELVES WITH FAMILY.

12. UNICEF Canada (2019).
13. This indicator is part of the We are Protected Domain of the Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being.
14. This indicator is part of the We are Participating Domain of the Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being.
15. UNICEF Canada (2019).

WHAT IS MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

⚠ Where appropriate, national data has been provided for comparison to the YIS data. Please Note: all national data is pre-pandemic and thus, there are limitations in comparability.

Child and youth mental and emotional health includes their feelings, behaviour and thoughts. In particular, mental health "refers to cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being. It is all about how people think, feel, and behave. Mental health can affect daily living, relationships, and physical health".[16]

WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

Children and youth who have good mental and emotional health are able to understand and manage their own emotions and those of others. This includes being able to cope with challenges they experience in life and build healthy relationships with others including peers and adults.[17] In addition, children and youth who have good social and emotional skills have greater success in school and in life more generally.[18] Children and youth who do not have good emotional well-being can face many challenges in life. This includes challenges to relationships with family and friends, experiencing higher rates of stress, and social anxiety.[19] Helping children develop good mental and emotional health can provide them with the skills to better overcome such challenges, and have better overall well-being which is important to healthy development.

"I LIKED HOW EVERYTHING FROM SCHOOL LIFE TO FAMILY LIFE, TO PERSONAL LIFE AND MENTAL HEALTH [IN THE SURVEY] WAS CONSIDERED. THIS WAY, ALL FACTORS IMPACTING YOUTH AND THEIR EXPERIENCES CAN BE UNDERSTOOD…"

YIS Respondent

16. Felmen, A. (2020, April 13). What is Mental Health? Medical News Today. Available online: https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/154543
17. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004). Children's Emotional Development is Built into the Architecture of Their Brains: Working Paper No. 2 (3rd printing). Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 1-8. Available online: http://www.developingchild.net
18. Thomson, S. (2019, August 05). Assessing and Understanding Social and Emotional Skills: The OECD Study on Social and Emotional Skills [Paper presentation]. Research Conference 2019 – Preparing Students for Life in the 21st Century: Identifying, Developing and Assessing What Matters. Available online: https://research.acer.edu.au/research_conference/RC2019/5august/4
19. UNICEF Canada (2019).

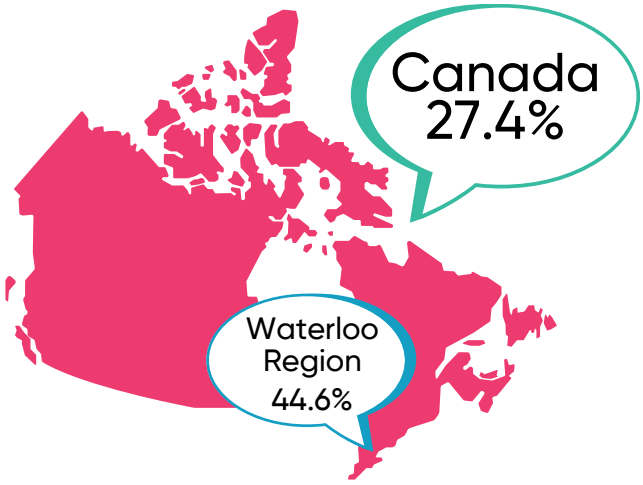
WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

CHILDREN AND YOUTH SELF-ASSESSED MENTAL HEALTH

Almost four in ten (37.4%) of respondents reported their mental health as very good or excellent. This is considerably lower than their self-reported physical health where 57.9% reported their physical health as very good or excellent.

37.4%

FEELING SAD OR HOPELESS[20]

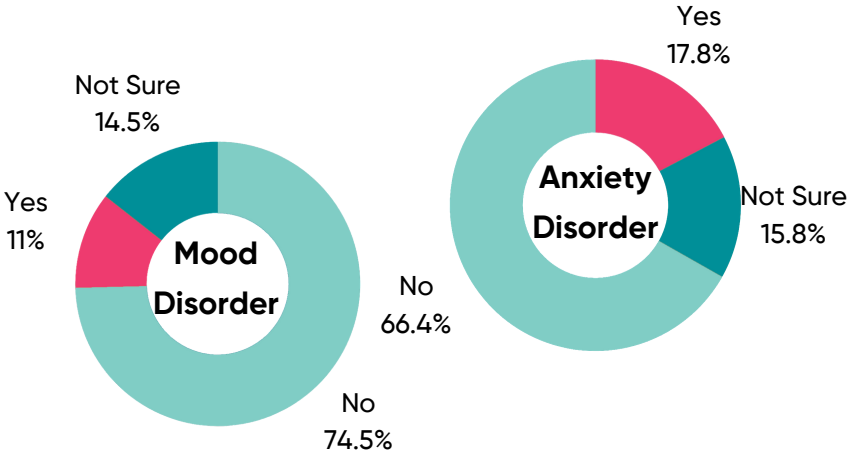


When asked to look over the past 12 months, 44.6% of YIS respondents reported feeling so sad or hopeless for several days in a row that they stopped doing usual activities. Across Canada, 27.4% of youth reported similar feelings of sadness and hopelessness during a 12 month period.[21]

CHILDREN AND YOUTH HAVING A DIAGNOSED MOOD OR ANXIETY DISORDER

Just over one in ten (11.0%) of respondents reported they have been diagnosed with a mood disorder.[22]

Almost one in five (17.8%) of respondents reported they have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.[23]



20. This indicator is part of the We are Happy and Respected Domain of the Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being.
21. UNICEF Canada (2019).
22. Data note/definition: Mood disorder - eg. depression, bipolar disorder, mania.
23. Data note/definition: Anxiety disorder - a phobia, obsessive- eg. compulsive disorder, panic disorder.

RISKY LIFESTYLE AND BEHAVIOURS

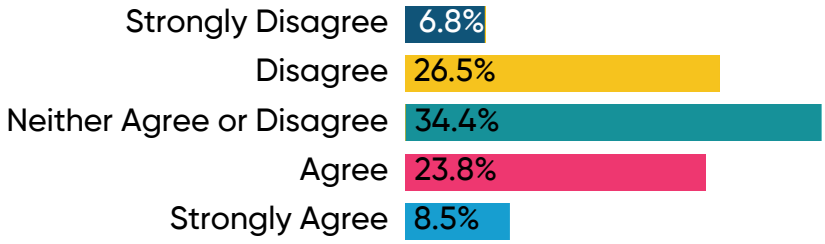
The majority of youth who responded had never engaged in the risky behaviours listed (alcohol, cannabis, e-cigarettes, prescription medications to get high, cigarettes). Alcohol was the most common risky behaviour, with 10.6% of respondents having consumed alcohol at least one day in the last 30 days. Just over 1% of respondents (1.4%) reported having drank alcohol at least ten times in the last 30 days. 1.0% of youth reported using cannabis, and 1.7% reported using e-cigarettes (vaping) at least ten times in the last 30 days, while no respondents reported smoking cigarettes this often.

Risky Behaviour	Never	1 to 9 days	10 to 29 days	Every day
Drank alcohol	89.4%	9.2%	1.4%	0.0%
Took cannabis	95.2%	3.8%	0.3%	0.7%
Used e-cigarettes (vaping)	96.2%	2.1%	0.7%	1.0%
Taken prescription medications to get high	96.6%	2.4%	0.7%	0.3%
Smoked cigarettes	98.3%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%

STRESS AND SCHOOL[24]

The YIS was a unique opportunity to hear from youth just after an abrupt transition to online learning due to COVID-19 safety measures. When answering this question, youth were encouraged to think about their overall school year experience. Almost one in three (32.3%) of YIS respondents felt as though they had more school work than they could handle. This is higher than their peers across Canada (22.8%) as reported by UNICEF Canada.[25]

How much do you agree or disagree that you have more school work than you can handle?



24. This indicator is part of the We are Learning Domain of the Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being.
25. UNICEF Canada (2019).

WHAT IS PHYSICAL HEALTH?

⚠ Where appropriate, national data has been provided for comparison to the YIS data. Please Note: all national data is pre-pandemic and thus, there are limitations in comparability.

Physical health refers to our bodies, how we take care of our bodies, and our capacity to participate and perform in everyday activities that are right for us. It includes physical activity, healthy eating, and access to care. Health is shaped from birth, and is influenced not only by choices made, but conditions children and youth grow up in, and access to resources and appropriate health care services.[26] Physical health, along with mental and emotional health, and social well-being all come together to shape a complete understanding of what it means to be healthy.[27]

WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

"Young people's own sense of health and their views about their health care are critical to their overall well-being".[28] Establishing healthy behaviours early in life improves mental health, and reduces the risk of long-term health problems. Physical health is linked with quality of life and participation.[29]

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

CHILDREN AND YOUTH SELF-ASSESSED PHYSICAL HEALTH

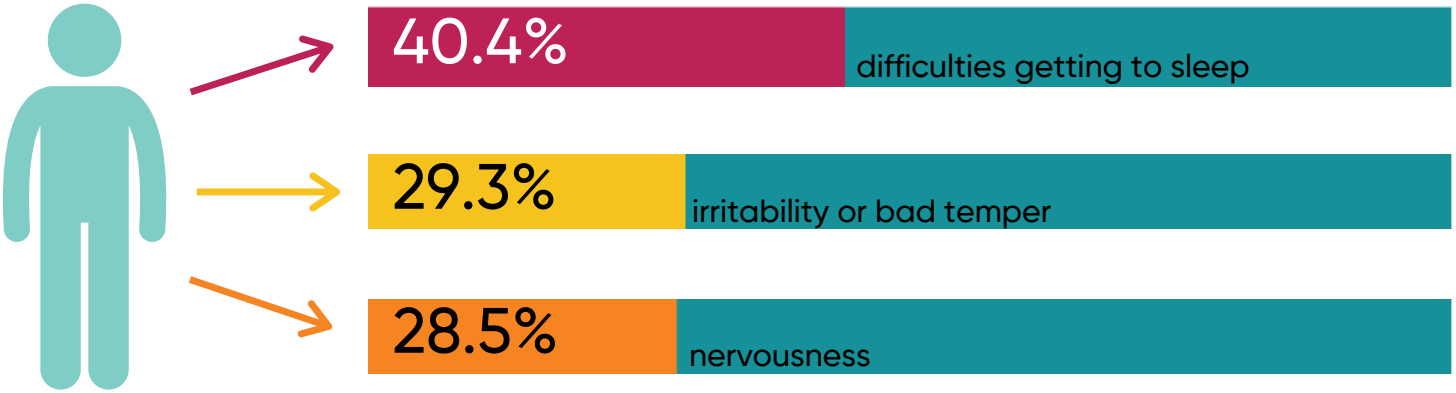
Almost six in ten of YIS respondents reported having very good or excellent physical health (57.9%). This is below the national data, with 75.7% of their peers across the country reporting very good or excellent physical health.[30]

57.9%

26. UNICEF Canada (2019).
27. WHO (2020). Constitution of the World Health Organization. Basic Documents, 49th edition. World Health Organization, Geneva.
28. UNICEF Canada (2019).
29. Aston, R. (2018) Physical Health and Wellbeing in Children and Youth: Review of the Literature.OECD Education Working Papers No. 170.OCED Publishing, Paris. Available: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/102456c7-en.pdf?expires=1600970656&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=270A3EB64ECEE7FE87DD3FB8961B1534
30. UNICEF Canada (2019).

SELF-REPORTED PHYSICAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS

When asked about their experiences with particular health symptoms, YIS respondents were most likely to have experienced difficulties getting to sleep (40.4%), irritability or bad temper (29.3%), or nervousness (28.5%) more than once a week or about every day.[31]



SLEEP

The YIS asked children and youth about their sleep habits. Insufficient sleep is often associated with poor performance and can impact productivity throughout the day.[32] As noted above, 40.4% of respondents reported regularly experiencing difficulties getting to sleep while 16.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had trouble staying awake during the day.

16.2% OF RESPONDENTS NOTED THAT THEY HAD TROUBLE STAYING AWAKE DURING THE DAY.

31. Data Note: Symptom list also included headache, stomach ache, backache, feeling low, dizzy.
32. Aston (2018).

WHAT IS LEARNING?

⚠ Where appropriate, national data has been provided for comparison to the YIS data. Please Note: all national data is pre-pandemic and thus, there are limitations in comparability.

Learning begins from birth, in families, in communities, and in cultures.[33] Often we think of learning in relation to school, but learning also extends beyond the classroom to everyday life. Learning allows children and youth chances to explore and understand the world, make mistakes and learn from challenges, and develop skills used throughout the lifespan.

WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

Learning and education has been directly linked to positive youth development, greater socio-economic opportunities, and positive health outcomes.[34] Settings in which youth feel comfortable and valued create opportunities to focus on personal growth, passions, and abilities.[35] Children and youth engaged in their learning and provided opportunities to set their own goals develop concepts of shared responsibility and accountability applied in later life.[36] Both formal and informal learning environments also provide opportunities for children and youth to build social connections with peers, form positive relationships with adults, and feel a sense of belonging.

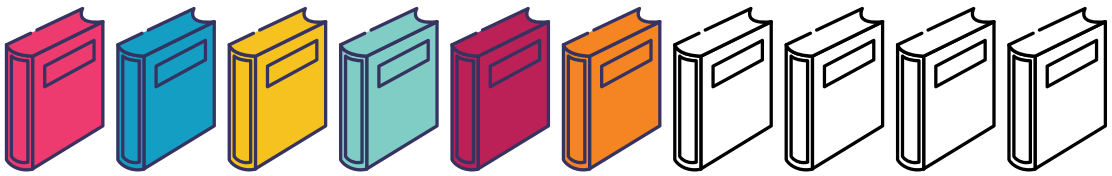
"[I LIKE THAT THIS SURVEY HAD] A SECTION ABOUT SCHOOL, AND HOW WE AS STUDENTS FELT ABOUT IT."

YIS Respondent

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

STRESS AND SCHOOL

About six in ten YIS respondents (60.5%) reported feeling some or a lot of pressure by the school work they have to do.

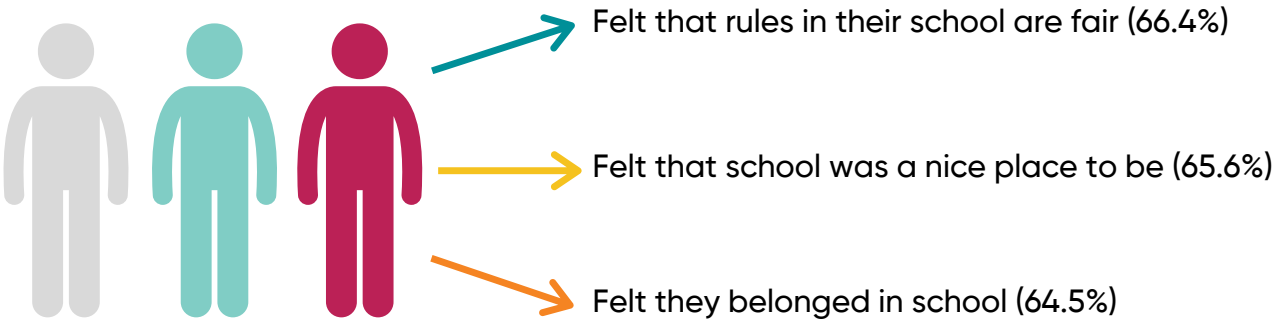


33. UNICEF Canada (2019).
34. Nishad, K., MacCormack, J., Kutsyuruba, B., McCart, S., & Freeman, J. (2014). Youth That Thrive: A Review of Critical Factors and Effective Programs for 12-25 Year Olds. Queen's University, Kingston, ON. Available: http://educ.queensu.ca/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.educwww/files/files/Youth-that-Thrive-Report(1).pdf; Aston, 2018.
35. Joselowsky, F. (2007) Youth Engagement, High School Reform, and Improved Learning Outcomes: Building Systemic Approaches for Youth Engagement. NASSP Bulletin, 91(3), 257-276. Available: file:///C:/Users/jlincho/Downloads/FrancineJoselowskyJournalarticleNASSP.pdf.
36. Joselowsky, 2007; UNICEF, (2019).

FEELINGS ABOUT SCHOOL

When asked how they feel about school, 85.5% of YIS respondents reported liking it a bit or a lot. When respondents were asked about their experiences in school, about two in three agreed or strongly agreed that the rules in their school are fair, that their school was a nice place to be, and that they belonged at school.

How do you feel about school...



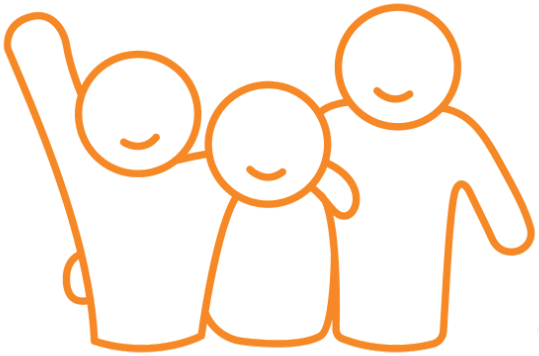
LEARNING EXPERIENCES OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM

The YIS asked young people about learning experiences outside of the classroom. Outside of school, respondents were most likely to participate in sports (42.0%) or church, religious or spiritual group activities (31.8%), while inside school, respondents most often participated in other activities (43.5%) and on sports teams (42.9%).

Group or activity involvement over the past year	Outside of School	At School
Sports team (e.g., volleyball, soccer, basketball)	42.0%	42.9%
Church, religious or spiritual group	31.8%	13.5%
Arts group (e.g., dance/theatre)	23.8%	34.2%
Community group (e.g., Scouts, Girl Guides, 4-H)	21.5%	9.4%
Another activity or group (e.g., model building, chess)	20.5%	43.5%

WHAT IS PARTICIPATING?

⚠ Where appropriate, national data has been provided for comparison to the YIS data. Please Note: all national data is pre-pandemic and thus, there are limitations in comparability.



Children and youth have the right to be heard, valued, and included in decisions that affect their lives. Participation includes "being actively engaged, according to their capacity, in family affairs, in community organizations, at school, in social movements and in civic and political life".[37] To make this happen, children and youth need access to information and services, opportunities to use their voices and express their ideas, and reduced barriers to participation and inclusion.

WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

Decisions are more effective and responsive to needs, when children and youth are involved in their communities and their voices included in decision. When children and youth are meaningfully participating they also develop their capacity to express themselves, feel confident to make their own choices, believe they can succeed, and can better see their ability to impact the world around them.[38] Opportunities for participation early in life lead to stronger connections to community and stronger long-term civic engagement.

"[THIS SURVEY] GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT ON WHERE WE STAND IN THE COMMUNITY, WHAT SITUATIONS WE NEED TO OVERCOME, AND HOW WE CAN DO BETTER."

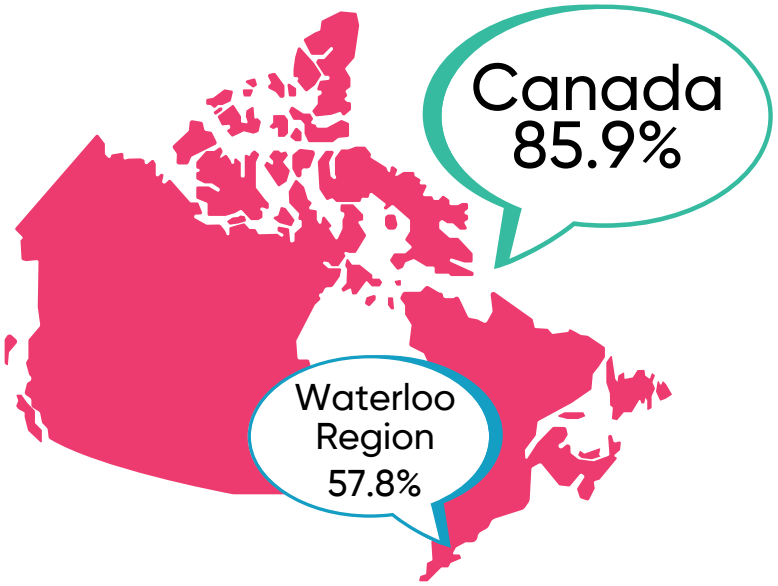
YIS Respondent

37. UNICEF Canada (2019), p. 33.
38. Joselowsky, F. (2007).

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

MANAGING RESPONSIBILITIES

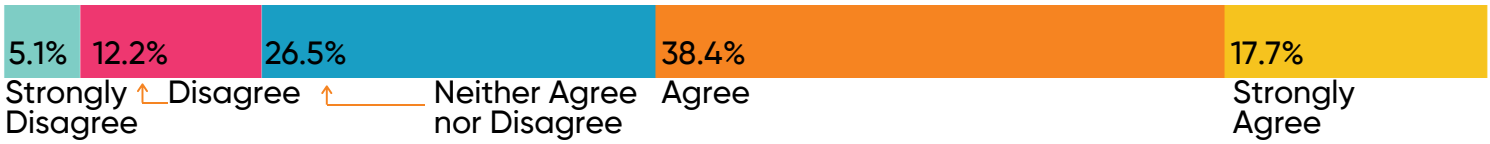
When asked about managing responsibilities, more than half (57.8%) of respondents felt good about being able to manage the responsibilities of their daily life, everyday or almost everyday. This is well below the national data, where UNICEF Canada reported 85.9% of youth feeling good about managing daily responsibilities.[39]



FEELING IN CONTROL

56.1% OF RESPONDENTS AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED THAT THEY HAVE CONTROL OVER THE ISSUES THAT MATTER TO THEM.

How much do you agree or disagree that you feel you have control over the issues that matter to you?

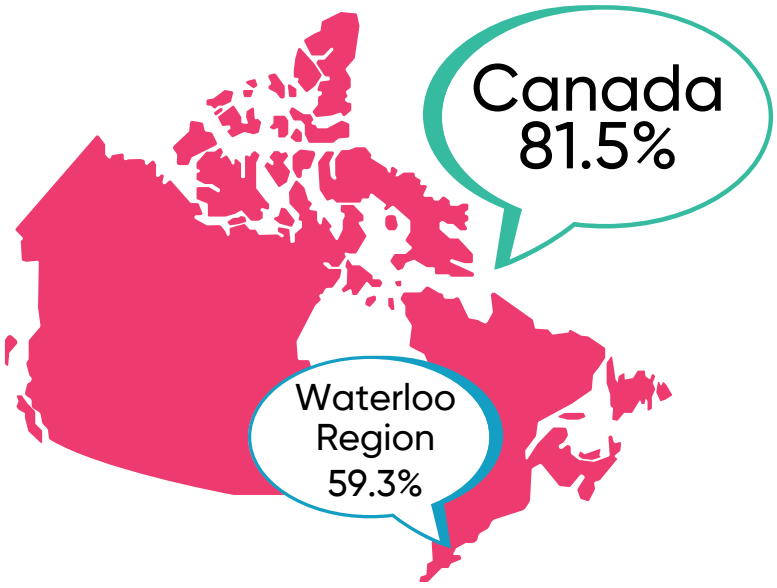


40.4% OF RESPONDENTS FELT THAT THEY HAVE TOTAL CONTROL OVER THEIR LIVES.

How much do you agree or disagree that you have total control over your life?

39. UNICEF Canada (2019).

SELF EXPRESSION



Regular opportunities to participate help young people to develop their capacity and confidence to express themselves.[40] Among YIS respondents, 59.3% felt confident to express their ideas or opinions, almost every day or everyday in the past month. This number is well below the national data of 81.5% of youth who felt confident to express ideas and opinions.[41]

GETTING INVOLVED

Just over seven in ten (72.5%) of YIS respondents participated in at least one civic engagement activity in the past 12 months. Of those who participated, youth were most often engaged in supporting a local charity (45.8%) and joining a discussion about a local issue on social media (44.9%).

Civic engagement participation in the past 12 months	Per cent
I participated in a local event in support of a charitable organization	45.8%
I joined a discussion on social media about a local issue	44.9%
I participated in a public demonstration or protest	32.7%
I wrote a letter or email to, or spoke with, a municipal official about a local issue	20.1%
I wrote a letter to the editor of the newspaper about a local issue	4.1%

40. UNICEF Canada (2019).
41. UNICEF Canada (2019).

WHAT IS FREE TO PLAY?

⚠ Where appropriate, national data has been provided for comparison to the YIS data. Please Note: all national data is pre-pandemic and thus, there are limitations in comparability.

According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a right to play refers to rest, leisure, recreational activities and play appropriate to the age of the young person.[42] Play can refer to both structured and formal opportunities available to children and youth, as well as free-space for self-directed play and unstructured leisure.[43] Participation in social and culture activities are also included.

WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

Play and leisure are critical to development. Opportunities for play and leisure provide space for children and youth to explore their identities, interests, and passions while practicing independence, social skills, and decision-making.[44] Play and leisure have also been linked to positive physical health and psychological well-being, supporting young people in feeling a sense of connection and coping with stress.[45]

"[I LIKE THAT THE SURVEY HAD] LOTS OF DIFFERENT QUESTIONS THAT WERE REALLY IMPORTANT NOW WITH COVID." **YIS Respondent**

42. UN Commission on Human Rights (1990). Convention on the Rights of the Child. UN Commission on Human Rights (46th Session), Geneva. Available: https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx.
43. UNICEF Canada (2019).
44. UNICEF Canada (2019).
45. Shin, K & You, S. (2013). Leisure Type, Leisure Satisfaction and Adolescents' Psychological Wellbeing. Journal of Pacific RIM Psychology, 7(2), 53-62. Available: https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/BEFB7723CC9F9D737FD9FB97C743DFD0/S1834490913000068a.pdf/leisure_type_leisure_satisfaction_and_adolescents_psychological_wellbeing.pdf.

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

REGULAR OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY AND LEISURE

Regular opportunities for play and leisure are important. When asked how often they take part in outdoor activities in a typical week (outside of organized sports and gym class), about half of respondents (50.5%) reported spending 3 hours or more each week doing activities outdoors such as pick-up basketball and skateboarding.[46]

Outdoor activities

50.5%

3 hours or more per week

When asked how often they spend doing activities on their own (outside of homework or chores), 65.3% of respondents reported spending 3 or more hours on a typical day doing individual activities such as playing or reading.[47]

Individual activities

65.3%

3 hours or more per day

46. Data note: e.g., active games with friends at recess, pick-up basketball, skateboarding.
47. Data note: e.g., playing, reading, writing, listening to music.

TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA USE

Media and technology use is one way for young people to engage in play and leisure activities. Among YIS respondents, about nine in ten (89.7%) reported watching tv/movies/videos or live streams, spending on average 2.2 hours doing so on a typical day. About eight in ten (82.3%) of respondents were using social media daily, spending on average 2.2 hours on a typical day connecting with friends through social media platforms.

Self Reported Technology and Media Use	Per cent [48]	Average number of hours per day
Watching television, DVDs, online movies/videos or live streams	89.7%	2.2
Using social media to connect with friends	82.3%	2.2
Searching the internet for interest	73.4%	1.4
Playing computer/video games	63.8%	1.7

IMPACTS OF COVID-19

COVID-19 and social distancing safety precautions have had an impact on young people's experiences and opportunities to participate in play and leisure activities. The Youth Impact Survey asked respondents to think about how COVID-19 and social distancing measures have impacted their free time and participation. About six in ten (59.8%) of respondents reported that because of COVID-19 and social distancing their participation had gone down a little or a lot. Alternatively, almost two in ten (19.6%) respondents noted that their participation has gone up a little or a lot.

48. Data note: Per cent of respondents who spent at least one minute a day engaged in that specific technology and media use.

WHAT IS CONNECTED TO OUR ENVIRONMENT?

⚠ Where appropriate, national data has been provided for comparison to the YIS data. Please Note: all national data is pre-pandemic and thus, there are limitations in comparability.

A young person's environment includes both the natural and built spaces surrounding them. It is important that children and youth feel safe and welcome in these spaces; this can help them to have a sense of place, which supports a sense of belonging.[49] Children need to have access to open, green spaces, such as parks and trails; these environments provide children with room to move freely and to participate in leisure activities.[50]

WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

Critical to the well-being of children and youth is living in and having a relationship with a sustainable environment.[51] Fundamental to their health and development is having access to clean air and drinking water yet, "many Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by a persistent lack of access to clean, safe water, despite incremental changes."[52] "Children are more sensitive than adults to deprivations, toxins and air pollution, and they can be particularly vulnerable to disasters and displacement, which can threaten their survival and health, disrupt their education, relationships and culture, and drain resources that could have been used to invest in their well-being."[53]

"I BELIEVE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT FOR STUDENTS TO FEEL LIKE THEY HAVE A VOICE WHEN IT COMES TO ISSUES THAT DIRECTLY AFFECT THEM."

YIS Respondent

49. UNICEF Canada (2019).
50. UNICEF Canada (2019).
51. UNICEF Canada (2019).
52. Raphael, D., Bryant, T., Mikkonen, J. and Raphael, A. (2020). Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts, 2nd Edition. https://thecanadianfacts.org/The_Canadian_Facts-2nd_ed.pdf and UNICEF Canada (2019), p.57.
53. UNICEF Canada (2019), p.55.

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Among YIS respondents, 72.6% agreed or strongly agreed they had a personal responsibility to help protect the natural environment.

72.6%

About one in four (24.1%) regularly participate in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment.[54]

24.1%

NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

When thinking about natural environments, 74.6% of respondents agreed that there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy nature in their neighbourhood. In regards to built environments, 60.5% of respondents agreed that there are recreation and culture facilities that are easy for them to get to. However, only 45.9% of respondents agreed that the quality of recreation and culture facilities in their community is very high.

74.6%

Opportunities to enjoy nature

60.5%

Easy access to recreation and culture facilities

45.9%

Quality of recreation and culture facilities in their community is very high.

54. Data note: Events such as protests, fundraising, community clean-ups.

WHAT IS PROTECTED?

⚠ Where appropriate, national data has been provided for comparison to the YIS data. Please Note: all national data is pre-pandemic and thus, there are limitations in comparability.

Children have the right to be safe and protected. They "need to be safe and protected in their homes, at school, at work and in communities, online and offline."[55] "They should not be exposed to bullying, discrimination, exploitation, serious crime or disproportionate risk of harm – physically, socially, emotionally or psychologically."[56] When children and youth do not feel that they are safe or protected, it is important that there are resources or trusted adults that they can go to for help. Children and youth may not be able to avoid risk completely; to help protect young people, we can provide them with opportunities to develop the necessary skills to better manage the risks or dangers they may encounter.

WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

"Children who experience one form of violence are more likely to experience multiple forms of violence."[57] When protective factors are not present, individuals who have had adverse or negative childhood experiences, such as abuse and neglect, may experience poor mental and physical health later in life.[58]

"...I THINK RELATIONSHIPS ARE AN IMPORTANT THING TO BUILD FOR A COMMUNITY TO BECOME A BETTER PLACE FOR EVERYONE." **YIS Respondent**

55. UNICEF Canada (2019), p.41.
56. UNICEF Canada (2019), p.41.
57. UNICEF Canada (2019), p. 43.
58. Crouch, C. (2019). Safe, Stable, and Nurtured: Protective Factors against Poor Physical and Mental Health Outcomes Following Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma, 12(2), 165-173. Doi: 10.1007/s40653-018-0217-9.

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

COMMUNITY SAFETY

"Most young people have strategies to protect themselves from crime."[59] When asked how safe they feel from crime in their neighbourhood, 91.1% of respondents felt reasonably safe or very safe.

In general, how safe do you feel from crime in your neighbourhood?	Per cent
Very safe	51.4%
Reasonably safe	39.7%
Somewhat unsafe	7.5%
Very unsafe	1.4%

SCHOOL SAFETY

Among YIS respondents, just over 6 in 10 (61.0%) had experienced some form of bullying at least once over the past couple of months.

61.0%

Being left out on purpose, excluded from groups of friends, and being completely ignored was the most common form of bullying.

37.1% OF RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCED THIS TYPE OF BULLYING AT LEAST ONCE OVER THE PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS.

For those who experienced bullying at the highest frequency (2-3 times per week or everyday), the form that it most often took was sexual jokes, comments, or gestures.

8.7% OF RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCED THIS FORM OF BULLYING TWO TO THREE TIMES PER WEEK OR EVERY DAY FOR THE PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS.

59. UNICEF Canada (2019), p. 42.

WHAT IS SECURITY?

⚠ Where appropriate, national data has been provided for comparison to the YIS data. Please Note: all national data is pre-pandemic and thus, there are limitations in comparability.

"Children are secure when their parents have access to decent employment, and when they live in safe and affordable housing, have enough nutritious food, and can meet their basic needs, as well as the things that enable them to feel included in society and among their peers, such as having access to the internet."[60] Income is an important social determinant of health as it impacts food security, housing, education, and early child development.[61]

WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

Having access to quality and nutritious food supports children's physical and mental health and the experience of malnutrition during childhood can lead to long-term consequences for their development.[62] Housing security or living in a safe and affordable living environment is necessary for children's well-being. For their well-being, it is important that not only are children's basic needs met, but that they also have broader societal opportunities to participate within their community.[63]

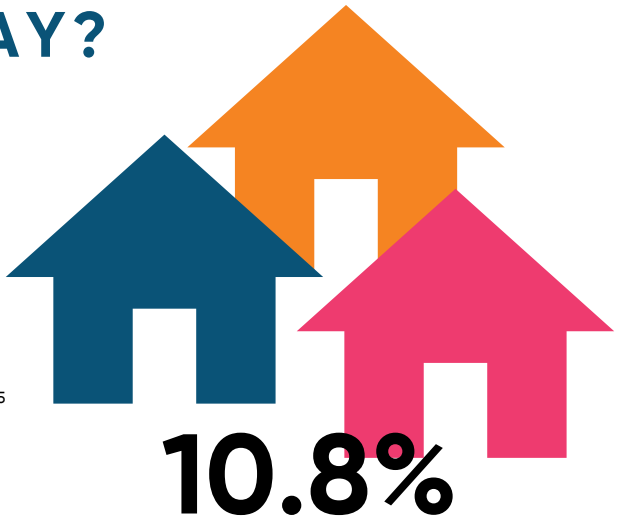
"IT REALLY MADE ME REFLECT ON THINGS THAT I DON'T NORMALLY PAY ATTENTION TO, AND IT MADE ME REALIZE HOW FORTUNATE I AM TO BE IN SUCH A GOOD POSITION IN LIFE. I HAVE EVERYTHING I NEED TO BE COMPLETELY SAFE AND HEALTHY."

YIS Respondent

60. UNICEF Canada (2019), p.29.
61. Raphael et al., (2020).
62. Raphael et al., (2020).
63. UNICEF Canada (2019).

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

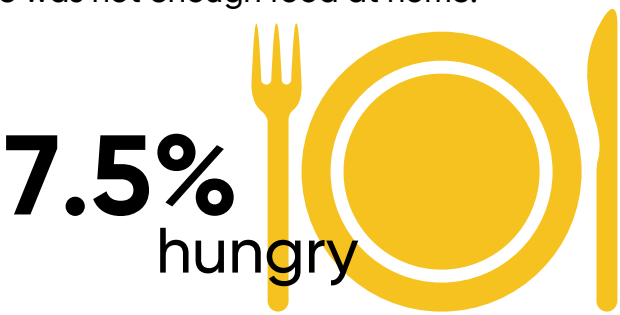
HOUSING (IN)SECURITY



Among YIS respondents, 10.8% reported experiences of homelessness and/or hidden homelessness.[64] This is higher than youth across Canada, where 3.8% of youth reported experiences of homelessness and/or hidden homelessness.[65] YIS respondents who had experiences of homelessness were more likely to have experienced hidden homeless (7.8%). All respondents who reported experiences with homelessness, also reported experiences with hidden homelessness.

FOOD SECURITY

Regularly going to bed hungry can often be an indicator of other factors that can impact well-being, like poverty or family stress. Among YIS respondents, 7.5% reported going to school or bed hungry sometimes, often, or always. Across the country, 23.3% of youth reported going to school or to bed hungry because there was not enough food at home.[66]



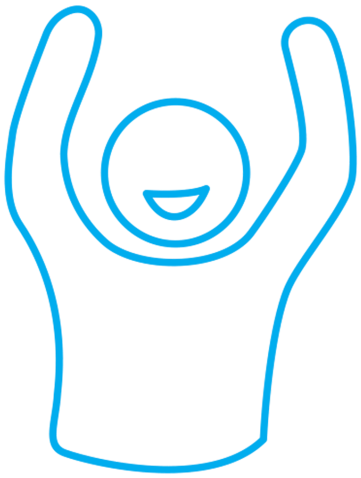
MATERIAL SECURITY

"Material security supports health, protection, learning, freedom to play and the opportunity to dream."[67] Across Canada, 56.1% of youth thought their family was quite well off or very well off.[68] Similarly, among Youth Impact Survey 53.4% of youth thought their family was quite well off or very well off.

53.4% THOUGHT THEIR FAMILY WAS QUITE WELL OFF OR VERY WELL OFF.

64. Data note/definition: Homeless - had to live in a shelter, on the street, or an abandoned building. Hidden Homelessness - had to temporarily live with family or friends, in your car, or anywhere else because you had nowhere else to live.
65. UNICEF Canada (2019).
66. UNICEF Canada (2019).
67. UNICEF Canada (2019), p. 29.
68. UNICEF Canada (2019).

WHAT IS HAPPY AND RESPECTED?



⚠ Where appropriate, national data has been provided for comparison to the YIS data. Please Note: all national data is pre-pandemic and thus, there are limitations in comparability.

"Young people's sense of well-being – how they tell us they are – is ultimately how we know how Canada measures up".[69] To answer the question, 'Are we happy and respected?', we look at how all of the indicators in the Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being influence the overall assessment children and youth make about their lives.[70]

WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

Happiness can be understood as a general descriptor of life satisfaction; and "life satisfaction is a strong proxy indicator of overall well-being."[71] It is important that children and youth know their opinions and contributions are being listened to and valued. Feeling cared about, accepted, and respected contributes to a young person's sense of belonging.[72]

"I LIKED HOW THE SURVEY REFLECTS MY OWN LIFE AND EVEN I GOT TO LEARN ABOUT MYSELF A BIT BY COMPLETING THE SURVEY. I ALSO LIKE HOW THIS SURVEY IS GOING TO HELP ME IN FUTURE."

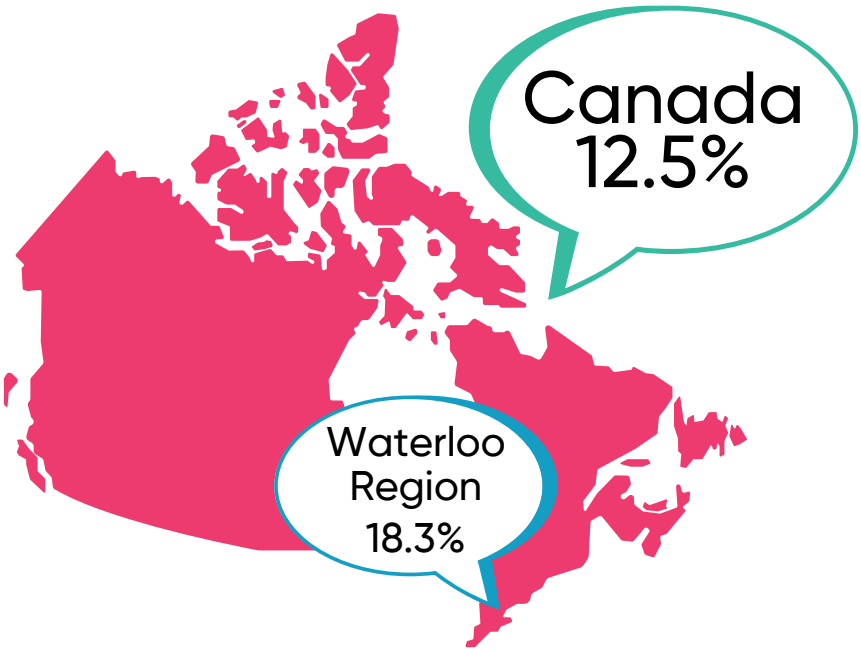
YIS Respondent

69. UNICEF Canada (2019), p.19.
70. UNICEF Canada (2019).
71. UNICEF Canada (2019), p.19.
72. Johnson, R. M., Strayhorn, T. L., & Parler, B. (2020). "I just want to be a regular kid:" A qualitative study of sense of belonging among high school youth in foster care. Children and Youth Services Review, 111(Complete). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.104832

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

STRESS IN LIFE

When asked about daily stress, 18.3% of YIS respondents reported finding most days quite a bit or extremely stressful. This is higher than their peers across Canada, where 12.5% of youth reported finding most days stressful.[73]



LIFE SATISFACTION

In Worlds Apart: Canadian Companion to UNICEF Report Card 16, UNICEF Canada starts with a focus on life satisfaction—how children and youth feel about their own lives—which is an important measure of their overall happiness and well-being. About 77% of children and youth in Canada report at least a moderate level of life satisfaction, ranking 28th out of 38 peer countries. Looking at the responses from the YIS regarding life satisfaction, Waterloo Region is comparable, but observing lower life satisfaction to Canada overall.[74]

74.8% OF YIS RESPONDENTS REPORT AT LEAST A MODERATE LEVEL OF LIFE SATISFACTION.

73. UNICEF Canada (2019).
74. UNICEF Canada (2020).