Children and Youth Planning Table
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Timely child and youth well-being data released by the Children and Youth Planning Table

Disaggregated Age Snapshot from the 2021 Waterloo Region Youth Impact Survey is now available.

Waterloo Region, April 2022 – Disaggregated age data from the Youth Impact Survey (YIS) provides a much-needed snapshot of the lives of many children and youth in our community over the last year.

The Children and Youth Planning Table's (CYPT) vision of happy, healthy children and youth— today and tomorrow, applies to all children and youth in our community. Given the importance of centering equity, social inclusion, and anti-discrimination in our belonging-related work, the CYPT is disaggregating the 2021 Youth Impact Survey across a variety of demographic and identity-based dimensions.

Our latest Snapshot release focuses on **age** and data has been disaggregated into three different categories. Ages 9-12, ages 13-15, and ages 16-18.

The CYPT, in partnership UNICEF Canada, Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), KW Community Foundation and the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW) at the University of Waterloo ran the Waterloo Region Youth Impact Survey for young people in our community through the Spring of 2021. The survey was an opportunity for young people in our community to speak to their own well-being. Data from the 1074 young people in Waterloo Region who participated completed the survey was published in December of 2021.

The YIS asked questions across 9 dimensions of well-being based on the Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being including belonging, mental and emotional health, connection to the environment and more. The ultimate goal of the disaggregated YIS Snapshot Briefs is to provide members of our community with equity-focused insights that take into account the needs and interests of different groups of children and youth.

Children and Youth Planning Table of Waterloo Region

Fast Facts:

- 1074 youth from diverse backgrounds completed the Waterloo Region Waterloo Region Youth Impact Survey between April 30 and June 5, 2021.
- The Youth Impact Survey included over one hundred data points. The information showcased in this data snapshot include 16 data points that were prioritized by young people, community stakeholders and/or where there were notable differences between subgroups.
- While there was quite a large sample size across all three age ranges, a breakdown by percentage of respondents shows that almost half of respondents (45.8%) were between the ages of 13 and 15.
- Aggregate data suggests that 64.1% of all YIS respondents said they felt a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their community. After disaggregating our data, we see a 32.1 percentage point difference between youth ages 9-12, who appear to have the highest sense of community belonging (82.4%), compared to youth 16-18 years old, who appear to have the lowest levels (50.3%).
- UNICEF Canada defines belonging as "feeling loved and supported and having mutually caring and respectful relationships."9 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.
- On average, 9-12 year old respondents were 31.8 percentage points more likely to express that they had a more positive perception of their mental health compared to 16-18 year olds and 15.6 percentage points more than 13-15 year olds.

Next Steps:

- The CYPT's next steps include disaggregating the data along eight other subpopulations of young people including: age, gender identity, racial identity, those with special needs and more. We are also working directly with young people in the community in co-creating meaningful actions to support the needs raised from the Youth Impact Survey.

Quotes from Respondents:

"Please support children"

-Youth Respondent between the ages of 16 and 18

"I think that at school, teachers need to do some more educating on how to get the support you need, even at a young age."

-Youth Respondent between the ages of 13 and 15

"I feel as though adults don't take youths very seriously with things that matter/affect us. Lots of teens can't tell parents their problems because they just get pushed aside or get told

that they've had it worse. So we as teens bottle it up and pretend to be happy, while it's so hard on the inside. It gets very lonely when you feel that the people that are closest to you, don't care about your mental well-being."

-Youth Respondent between the ages of 13 and 15

Making Sense of these Findings:

"As children grow up, there are increasing social and occupational demands as life becomes more complex. School becomes more challenging. Peer and romantic relationships take greater primacy in the developmental context. Many young people navigate employment and education. Youth increasingly look-towards their future aspirations. Social media and online life are more important, and families must renegotiate boundaries and expectations as youth become young adults. For females, specifically, there is an increase in mental health problems related to eating and body image.

It is important to remember that most children and families thrive during this developmental epoch, though it also creates potential bumps in the road. Studies show that youth and families who struggle more tend to be those with histories of adversity, including experiences of marginalization and discrimination. It is essential for communities to consider "transitional aged youth" as a distinct group with developmental milestones, offering opportunities for meaningful engagement, belonging, and (when necessary) mental health services that support their unique needs."

-Dillon T. Browne, Ph.D., C.Psych.
Canada Research Chair in Child and Family Clinical Psychology
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology
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About the CYPT:

The Children and Youth Planning Table (CYPT) is a member-driven partnership with over 60 Voting Member Organizations across Waterloo Region. The CYPT works to improve the wellbeing of children and youth through a system of coordinated and effective services that are supported by capacity building initiatives. Recognizing the complex challenges and issues related to the well-being of children and youth, the CYPT operates through a collective impact model seeking to promote the shared vision of: Happy, healthy children and youth—today and tomorrow.

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