2021 YOUTH IMPACT SURVEY

EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION DUE TO ONES SEXUAL ORIENTATION SNAPSHOT

SUGGESTED CITATION

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PARTNERS

We are so grateful to our partners for their support in the development and delivery of our community survey, and for continuing to support children and youth across Waterloo Region.

unicef CANADA | The Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being

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KITCHENER WATERLOO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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We are especially thankful to our colleagues at SPECTRUM Waterloo Region's Rainbow Community Space and the OK2BME program at KW Counselling Services who have provided their input and support in the drafting of this Snapshot Report.

MORE FROM THE CHILDREN AND YOUTH PLANNING TABLE

For more resources and information from the Children and Youth Planning Table, please visit www.childrenandyouthplanningtable.ca or scan this code:

We acknowledge that the land on which the Children and Youth Planning Table primarily operates on is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishnaabe, and Neutral People. We acknowledge the enduring presence of the Indigenous people with whom we share this land today, their achievements, and their contributions to our community. We offer this acknowledgment as an act of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples of Canada.

CONTENT WARNING

The data briefs highlight data related to mental health, experiences of discrimination, experiences of homelessness, and other areas that impact child and youth well-being. Some content may be difficult to read, and/or remind readers of challenging personal experiences. We encourage all readers to prioritize their own well-being when reviewing this information. If needed, please reach out to any one of the following resources for support:

Front Door (for youth) - 519-749-2932
Kids Help Phone - 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868
Counselling Collaborative of Waterloo Region - 519-804-1097
Here 24/7 - 1-844-437-3247 (HERE247)
LGBT Youthline 1.800.268.9688
Trans Lifeline 1.877.330.6366

YOUTH IMPACT SURVEY EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION DUE TO ONES SEXUAL ORIENTATION SNAPSHOT

WHAT IS THE YOUTH IMPACT SURVEY?

The **Youth Impact Survey** (YIS) is our community's opportunity to hear directly from young people about their own well-being. It's based on the Canadian Index of Child and Youth Well-being, a framework developed by UNICEF Canada to better understand how children and youth are doing across the country.

We heard from 1,074 young people from across Waterloo Region, ages nine to 18, who filled out the 2021 Youth Impact Survey. To read our overall findings, please **click here** to access our data briefs.

DISAGGREGATED SNAPSHOTS

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 YIS across a variety of demographic and identity-based dimensions.

WHAT IS DISAGGREGATED DATA?

Disaggregated data is data that is broken down into smaller units or groups; in our case, across youth who expressed they experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation. When possible, we disaggregate data to paint a more reflective picture of the experiences and needs of the diverse children and youth in our community. For example, what are the experiences of youth who have experienced discrimination because of their sexual orientation vs. those who haven't. This helps us reveal trends or patterns that might be hidden when focusing only on the total (i.e., aggregate) response number.

The ultimate goal of the 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. We hope that members of our community consider how they can use and promote this data to help improve and inform decision-making.

LIMITATIONS & CAUTION WHEN READING

It is important to remember that the data presented in this brief only reflects the responses from the children and youth who filled out the 2021 YIS. While we are excited to have received over 1,000 responses in 2021, we also recognize that our survey does not capture the experiences and input of ALL children and youth in Waterloo Region.[1] Given this limitation, please consider the results of our survey as an important **starting point** in better understanding the diverse needs of children and youth in Waterloo Region.

The data points that we included in this Snapshot Brief were prioritized based on ongoing discussions with young people and with the CYPT membership. We also focused on data that, through statistical testing, suggested that there were notable differences between subgroups in our survey. While the breakdown of data in this brief is based on experiences of discrimination due to one's sexual orientation, remember that there are also other identity and experience-based factors that contribute to the findings that we are seeing (e.g. a respondent's geographic location, age, gender, or race). Likewise, please consider that there are many data points not included in our briefs where there were smaller differences between the subgroups. In many cases, all subgroups expressed similar levels of self-perceived positive or negative outcomes.

Lastly, please consider how structural and systemic inequities contribute to what we are seeing in our findings. When reading, remember that children and youth have experienced significant barriers and challenges due to COVID-19, international and local events, and daily systemic barriers that impact their well-being. Based on community and national research, we know that experiences of well-being can vary between subgroups and that barriers continue to exist for some members of our community. Please remember that we all look at the world differently, and consider how your unconscious bias may influence your individual perception and opinion about this data.

This is just a snapshot of over one hundred data points collected through the 2021 YIS! If you'd like additional information or access to a larger set of disaggregated data, please contact a member of the **CYPT Backbone Team**.

"I THINK THERE SHOULD BE MORE RESOURCES FOR LGBTQ+ YOUTH AND NOT JUST DURING PRIDE MONTH."

—2021 YIS Respondent

1 In research terms, we used non-random or non-probability sampling techniques, such as convenience and snowball sampling (this explains how we reached out to our respondents). As there are limitations in our ability to use alternative random sampling techniques, the 1,074 individuals making up the final aggregate sample cannot be considered representative of all children and youth in Waterloo Region. However, given the large number of respondents and their diverse composition, the children and youth who chose to participate do reflect a reasonable cross-section of children and youth in Waterloo Region.

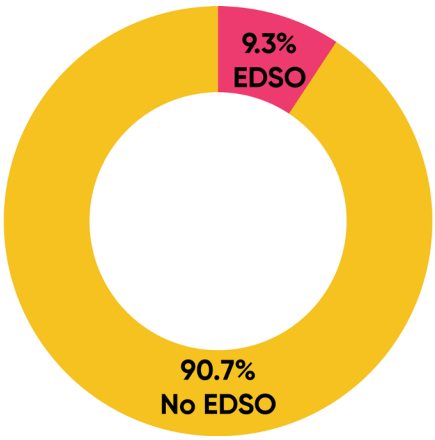
KEY FINDINGS[2]

PLEASE NOTE: The Youth Impact Survey included over one hundred data points. The information showcased in this particular data snapshot are ones that were prioritized by young people, community stakeholders and/or where there were notable differences between subgroups.

DISCRIMINATION DUE TO SEXUAL ORIENTATION BREAKDOWN[3]

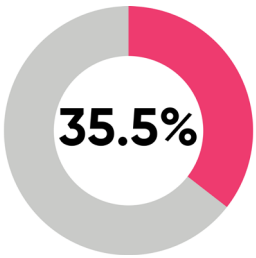
A major limitation of the 2021 survey was that there wasn't a direct question asking respondents about their sexual orientation. Sexual orientation, in this case, refers to a person's identity that can be defined by their sexual interest, attraction and/or behaviour. A person's sexual orientation can be fluid and it can change over time.

As an alternative way to better understand the experiences of those who may identify with a sexual orientation other than heterosexual, we analyzed the experiences of those who indicated experiencing discrimination over the past year because of their sexual orientation. While this 'proxy' measure is not perfect (e.g., there may be respondents who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, etc. but may not necessarily indicate that they have experienced discrimination due to their orientation), it is a starting point that can help us learn more about the specific experiences of young people representing diverse sexual orientations in our community. In total, almost one in 10 (9.3%) respondents identified experiencing discrimination due to their sexual orientation (EDSO), compared to 90.7% who indicated they didn't experience discrimination due to their sexual orientation (No EDSO).

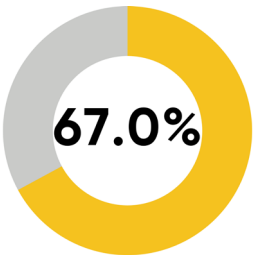


SENSE OF BELONGING

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, only about one-third (35.5%) of respondents with EDSO said they felt a strong or very strong sense of belonging. About two-thirds (67.0%) of respondents with No EDSO said they felt a strong or very strong sense of belonging (**a 31.5 percentage point difference**).



EDSO



No EDSO

2 The number of responses per question varies throughout the survey depending on the number of respondents choosing to answer or skip over each question. We have rounded our digits to one decimal place and as a result, percentages may not exactly sum up to 100 percent in every finding.

3 Those who experienced discrimination due to their sexual orientation were generally more likely (at least 10 percentage points) to be from Kitchener, to have a long-term physical or mental condition, and to identify with a gender identity other than boy or girl compared to those who did not identify as experiencing discrimination due to their sexual orientation. They were also less likely to be within the age 9-12 category and to identify as a boy.

LONELINESS & SOCIAL ISOLATION

When asked about their connections to those around them, 30.6% of all YIS respondents felt **isolated** from others in their community. When diving deeper into the data, **youth with EDSO were more than twice as likely to feel isolated in their community** than their peers with No EDSO (56.7% vs. 27.2%).

I feel isolated...

- **EDSO 56.7%**
- **No EDSO 27.2%**

Over a third of all YIS respondents (34.4%) reported that they felt **lonely**. Once again, **youth with EDSO were more than twice as likely to report feeling lonely** than youth with No EDSO (66.7% vs. 31.8%).

I feel lonely...

- **EDSO 66.7%**
- **No EDSO 31.8%**

Similarly, almost half of youth with EDSO (47.8%) said they felt **left out** when thinking about their social connection to others around them, while only 21.9% of their peers with No EDSO felt the same way.

I feel left out...

- **EDSO 47.8%**
- **No EDSO 21.9%**

55.3% of all YIS respondents felt they were a **valued member of their community**. Youth with EDSO were far less likely to feel like a valued member, with only 28.9% agreeing with this statement. On the other hand, 58.1% of youth with No EDSO said they felt like a valued community member, **a 29.2 percentage point difference**.

I feel like I am a valued member of my community...

- **EDSO 28.9%**
- **No EDSO 58.1%**

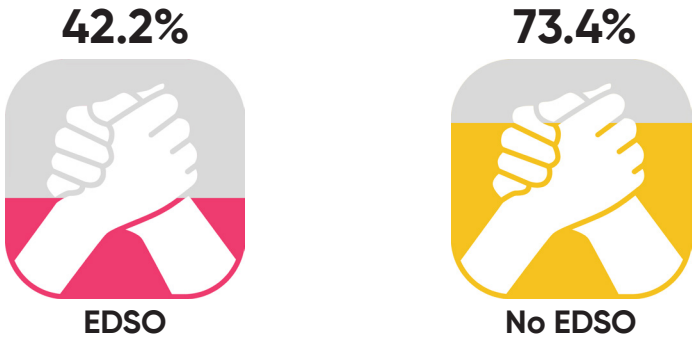
SUPPORT FROM TEACHERS

A supportive school environment and positive relationships with teachers are important in shaping a young person's sense of belonging and well-being. When looking at all responses, 83.1% of young people felt as though their teachers accepted them for who they are. Youth with No EDSO reported feeling similarly accepted by their teachers (85.3%). On the other hand, only 64.4% of youth with EDSO felt accepted by their teachers, **a 20.9 percentage point difference**.

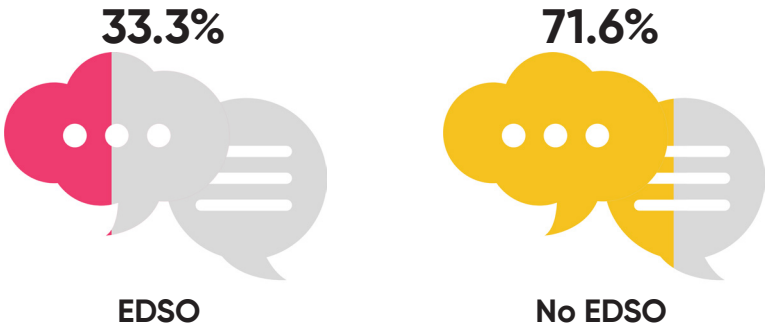
- **EDSO 64.4%**
- **No EDSO 85.3%**

SUPPORT FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

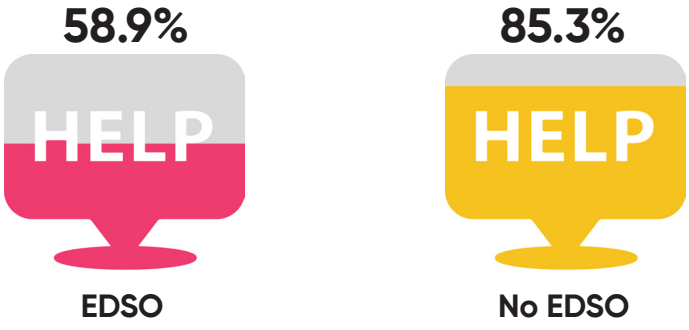
70.8% of YIS respondents felt they received the **emotional help and support that they needed from their family**. After disaggregating the data, we see this number is much lower for youth with EDSO, with less than half feeling that they received the emotional help and support they need from their family (42.2%). In comparison, about three quarters (73.4%) of their peers with No EDSO felt as though they received emotional help and support from their family, representing a **31.2 percentage point difference**.



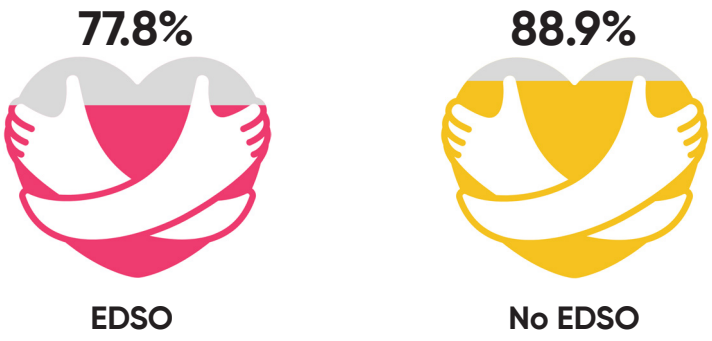
Almost seven in 10 (68.3%) of all YIS respondents said that they **felt free to express themselves with their family**. Once again, this number is much lower for youth with EDSO at 33.3%. In comparison, their peers with No EDSO were more than twice as likely to feel free to express themselves with their family (71.6%), representing a **38.3 percentage point difference**.



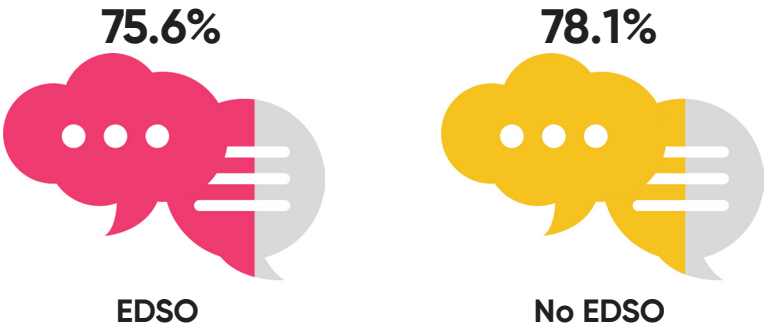
58.9% of youths with EDSO said that their **family tries to help them**. In comparison, youth with No EDSO were **26.4 percentage points** more likely to agree that their family tries to help them (85.3%).



77.8% of youths with EDSO indicated that their **family is willing to help them make decisions**. In comparison, youth with No EDSO were **11.1 percentage points** more likely to agree that their family is willing to help them make decisions (88.9%).

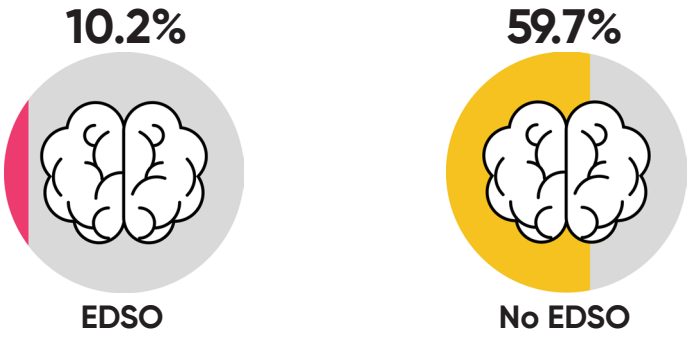


When asked if they **felt free to express themselves to their friends**, 77.7% of all YIS respondents said that they did. Looking closer at the disaggregated data, the majority of both youth with EDSO and with No EDSO reported feeling free to express themselves to their friends (75.6% vs. 78.1%). **On average, this means that respondents with EDSO feel as though they can express themselves more with their friends rather than their families**.

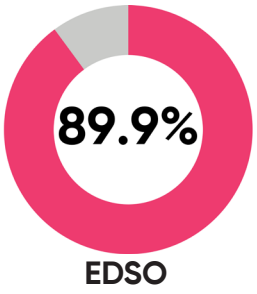


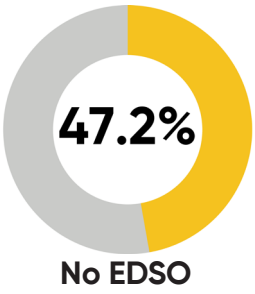
SELF-ASSESSED MENTAL HEALTH

YIS respondents were generally split between describing their mental health as more negative (45.1%) or more positive (54.9%). About six in 10 (59.7%) of those with No EDSO described their mental health as more positive. However, only about one in 10 (10.2%) of youth with EDSO described their mental health as more positive—**a 49.5 percentage point difference**.



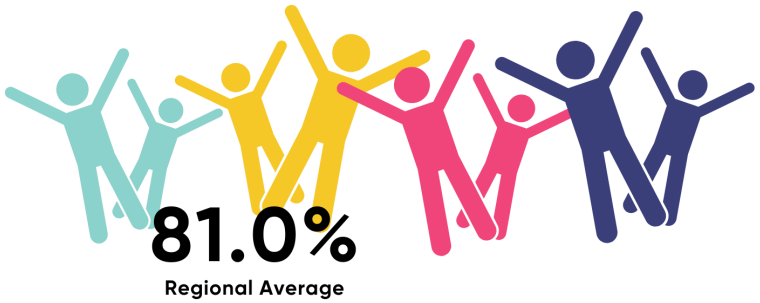
A similar trend was found in feelings of **sadness and hopelessness**.[4] The majority of respondents with EDSO (89.9%) agreed to ongoing feelings of sadness and hopelessness, impacting their usual activities. Less than half (47.2%) of those with No EDSO agreed to the same. **This represents a 42.7 percentage point difference between the two groups**.





SELF-ASSESSED PHYSICAL HEALTH

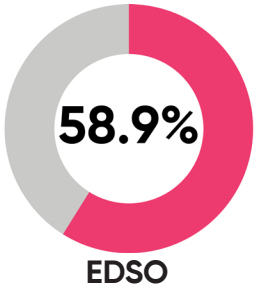
In terms of self-assessed physical health, 81.0% of all YIS respondents described their physical health as more positive. Youth with No EDSO were more likely to describe their physical health as more positive compared to youth with EDSO (82.7% vs 65.2%—**a 17.5 percentage point difference**).

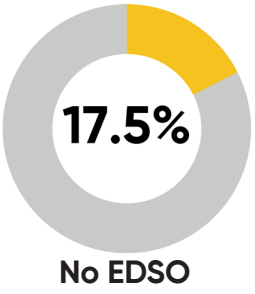


EDSO	65.2%
No EDSO	82.7%

EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION & BULLYING

41.5% of all YIS respondents said they experienced discrimination due to some personal characteristic, such as their physical appearance, sex, age, or race. 21.6% of these respondents indicated that they were discriminated against specifically because of their physical appearance. However, respondents with EDSO (58.9%) were three times more likely to experience discrimination due to their physical appearance in comparison to their peers with No EDSO (17.5%)—**a 41.4 percentage point difference**.





4 Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement to the statement: "During the past 12 months, I felt so sad or hopeless for several days in a row that I stopped doing usual activities."

In reference to regular experiences of bullying occurring at least two to three times a month over the past year, 12.9% of all YIS respondents said they were left out of things on purpose, excluded from their group of friends, or completely ignored. 12.3% said they were called mean names, were made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way. However, after disaggregating our data, we see that those with EDSO were almost **three times more likely to have been called mean names or made fun of** compared to their peers with No EDSO. They were also **more than two times as likely to feel left out**.

30.0% of those with EDSO said they were called mean names, were made fun of or teased in a hurtful way. 10.6% of those with no EDSO reported the same thing.

26.7% of those with EDSO said they were left out of things on purpose, excluded from their group of friends, or completely ignored. 11.5% of those with no EDSO reported the same thing.

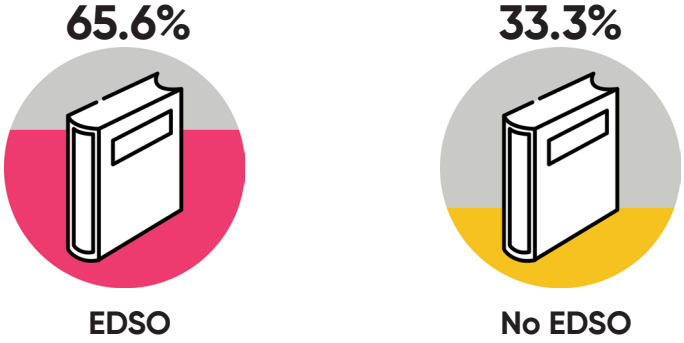
MANAGING RESPONSIBILITIES & FEELING IN CONTROL

About four in 10 YIS respondents (41.0%) agreed to having total control over their lives. Just over four in 10 (43.8%) youth with No EDSO agreed to this statement. However, less than two in 10 (16.7%) youth with EDSO agreed—**a 27.1 percentage point difference**.

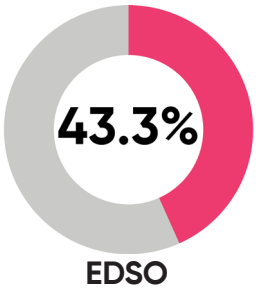
16.7% OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION DUE TO ONES SEXUAL ORIENTATION AGREE TO HAVING TOTAL CONTROL OVER THEIR LIVES.

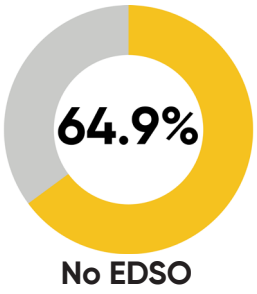
COPING WITH STRESS IN SCHOOL

YIS respondents were also asked to reflect on their overall experience throughout the 2020-2021 school year, which for many young people meant a mix of online and in-person learning. Over one third (36.4%) of all respondents said they had more school work than they could handle. Looking more closely, youth with EDSO were almost **twice as likely** to feel they had more school work than they could handle compared to their peers with no EDSO (65.6% vs. 33.3%).



Respondents were also asked to indicate how they feel about school. Over six in ten (61.9%) of all YIS respondents said they liked it a bit or a lot. Disaggregating this data, those with EDSO were **21.6 percentage points** less likely to express that they liked school compared to their peers with No EDSO (43.3% vs. 64.9%).





THE ENVIRONMENTS AROUND US

When thinking about the quality of the natural environment and their neighbourhood, almost three-quarters (74.0%) of all YIS respondents indicated that the quality was very high. When considering opportunities to enjoy nature in their neighbourhoods, 76.9% of those with no EDSO agreed the quality was very high, compared to 65.9% of those with EDSO—a difference of **11.0 percentage points**.

- **EDSO 65.9%**
- **No EDSO 76.9%**

57.1% of all YIS respondents agreed that the quality of recreation and culture facilities in their neighbourhood was very high. However, those with EDSO were **11.7 percentage points** less likely to agree compared to their peers with No EDSO (40.2% vs. 51.9%).

- **EDSO 40.2%**
- **No EDSO 51.9%**

Likewise, those with EDSO were also **11.9 percentage points** less likely to indicate that recreation and culture facilities are easy for them to get to in comparison to their peers (46.5% vs. 58.4%).

- **EDSO 46.5%**
- **No EDSO 58.4%**

"I AM SO DISAPPOINTED THAT THERE IS SO LITTLE LGBTQ+ AND FEMALE REPRESENTATION IN POPULAR MEDIA."

—2021 YIS Respondent

TAKING ACTION

Sharing this data is just the first step in contributing to meaningful advocacy and social change. We hope that members of the community will use this data to address inequities by:

- Raising awareness and promoting the YIS and Snapshot Briefs.
- Addressing the needs of specific populations in our communities through meaningful and equity-focused youth engagement
- Considering how collecting and analyzing disaggregated data can better inform organizational decision-making
- Ensuring that diverse members of our community are able to safely and comfortably share their lived experiences

At the CYPT, we'll continue to work with the community to collect high-quality local data that can provide insights on the well-being and needs of children and youth. This includes future iterations of the YIS, made accessible to all members of our community with a focus on increasing the diversity of responses. We'll also consider alternative methods to data collection and, whenever possible, we'll work towards the disaggregation of data to honour and recognize how different experiences and identities come together to impact a young person's well-being.

For a community-based resource to support your learning on diversity in sexual orientation, please click here to access SPECTRUM's 2021 LGBTQ2+ Terminology Reference Guide. Please also find SPECTRUM's own 2021 community survey on the perception of LGBTQ2+ people in Waterloo Region available here. For a list of additional resources to provide answers to common questions developed by OK2BME for kids, teens, adults, parents, seniors, educators and service providers, please click here.