# 2021 YOUTH IMPACT SURVEY

## LONG-TERM PHYSICAL OR MENTAL CONDITION 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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# 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)

# YOUTH IMPACT SURVEY
# LONG-TERM PHYSICAL OR MENTAL CONDITION 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 the different experiences of youth living with or without long-term conditions (mental or physical). 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 identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition compared to those who do not. 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 identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition that limits their ability to fully participate in community, school, work, or other activities, 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, 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**.

**"ALMOST NO WAY FOR KIDS WITH DISABILITIES LIKE ME TO BE INCLUDED, ESPECIALLY WITH COVID RISKS BECAUSE OF MY HEALTH ISSUES THAT PUT ME AT RISK. I GET LEFT OUT OF MY COMMUNITY DURING NORMAL TIMES BUT ESPECIALLY THIS YEAR."**

**—2021 YIS Respondent**

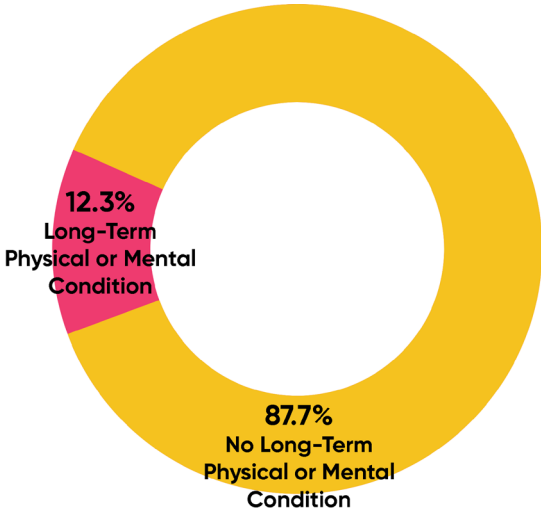
1 In research terms, we used non-random or non-probability sampling techniques, such as convenience and snowball sampling (this explains how we reached out to our respondents). As there are limitations in our ability to use alternative random sampling techniques, the 1,074 individuals making up the final 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.

## BREAKDOWN OF RESPONDENTS IDENTIFYING AS HAVING (OR NOT) A LONG-TERM PHYSICAL OR MENTAL CONDITION[3]

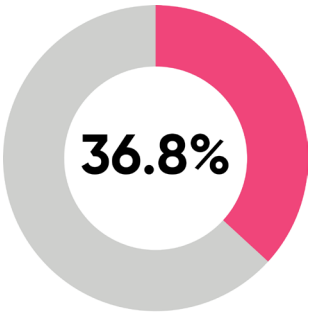
YIS respondents were able to select if they identified as having a long-term physical or mental condition that limits their ability to fully participate in community, school, work, or other activities. In total, 87.7% of respondents identified as not having a long-term condition whereas 12.3% of respondents indicated that they did.



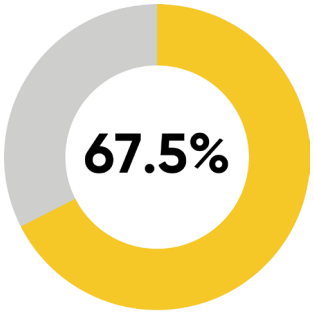

As an alternative way to better understand the experiences of those who may identify as having a disability, we analyzed the experiences of those who indicated having a long term physical or mental condition that impacts their ability to fully participate in community, school, work or other activities. While this 'proxy' measure is not perfect, it is a starting point that can help us learn more about the specific experiences of young people representing diverse physical or mental conditions. In total, 34.2% respondents identified experiencing discrimination due to their physical and mental conditions compared to 50.0% who indicated they didn't experience discrimination due to their physical and mental conditions.

## 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, we see that only about a third (36.8%) of respondents who identified as having a long-term physical or mental condition had a strong or very strong sense of belonging. In contrast, about two-thirds (67.5%) of respondents who didn't identify as having a long-term condition indicated a strong or very strong sense of belonging. **This is a 30.7 percent point difference between these two groups**.




**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**




**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

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 respondents who indicated having a long-term physical or mental condition were generally more likely (at least 10 percentage points) to identity as a gender identity other than a boy or girl and to have experienced discrimination due to their sexual orientation compared to those who did not indicate having a long-term condition.

# 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 two groups being reported on in this Snapshot, we see that youth who identified as having a long-term physical or mental condition were more than twice as likely (55.6%) to feel isolated from the community in comparison to their peers[4] (26.8%). **This is a 28.8 percentage point difference**.

**I feel isolated...**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Long-Term Condition** | **55.6%** | **No Long-Term Condition** | **26.8%** |

Over a third of all YIS respondents (34.4%) reported that they **felt lonely**. Youth identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition were more than twice as likely to feel lonely than those that didn't identify as having a long-term physical or mental condition (31.4% vs. 64.1%, a **32.7 percentage point difference**).

**I feel lonely...**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Long-Term Condition** | **64.1%** | **No Long-Term Condition** | **31.4%** |

Similarly, those who identified as having a long-term physical or mental condition were more than twice as likely to **feel left out** compared to those who didn't (45.7% vs. 21.9%, a **23.8 percentage point difference**).

**I feel left out...**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Long-Term Condition** | **45.7%** | **No Long-Term Condition** | **21.9%** |

55.3% of all YIS respondents felt like they were a **valued member of their community**. YIS respondents identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition were **30.4 percentage points less likely to feel they were a valued member of their community** compared to their peers (28.3% and 58.6% respectively).

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

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Long-Term Condition** | **28.3%** | **No Long-Term Condition** | **58.6%** |

4 In this Snapshot, peers specifically refers to youth who didn't identify as having a long-term physical or mental condition.

## 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 the responses, 83.1% of young people felt as though their teachers **accepted them for who they are**. Across the two groups being reported on, those identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition were **15.6 percentage points less likely to agree with this statement than their peers** (69.6% vs. 85.2%).

**Long-Term Condition** **69.6%**

**No Long-Term Condition** **85.2%**

## 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%) said they had **more school work than they could handle**. Looking more closely, those identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition were more likely to indicate that they had more school work than they could handle than their peers (57.5% vs. 33.3%, **representing a 24.2 percentage point difference**).

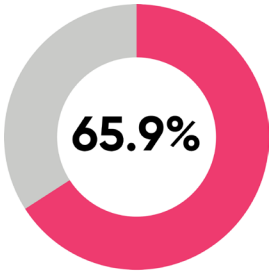
**57.5%**

**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

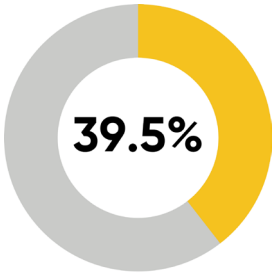
**33.3%**

**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

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, we notice that those who didn't identify as having a long-term physical or mental condition were **26.4 percentage** points more likely to express that they liked school compared to their peers who identified as having a long-term condition (65.9% vs 39.5%).




**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

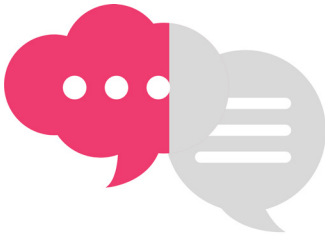



**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

# SUPPORT FROM FAMILY & FRIENDS

In terms of feeling free to express themselves with their families, almost seven in 10 (68.3%) of all YIS respondents said that they are **free to express themselves with their family**. However, just over half of those identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition (51.3%) agreed to this statement. This is **19.1 percentage points lower compared to their peers** (70.4%).

**51.3%**



**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

**70.4%**

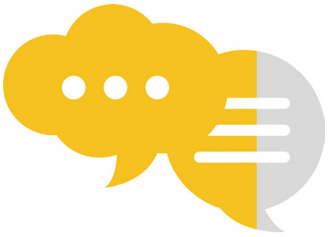
**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

When asked if they **felt free to express themselves with their friends**, 77.7% of all YIS respondents said that they did. While both groups felt more free to express themselves with their friends in comparison to their families, those identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition were 9 percentage points less likely to agree (69.8% vs. 78.8%).

**69.8%**

**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

**78.8%**



**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

When asked the question "My friends really help me" 64.1% of those identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition agreed to receiving **help from their friends**. This is 6.3 percentage points lower than respondents who didn't identify as having a long-term physical or mental condition (70.4%).

**64.1%**

**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

**70.4%**

**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

Youth were also asked if they can **count on their friends when things go wrong**. In this case, there is a larger difference in responses between the two groups in comparison to the previous question. 71.5% of those who didn't identify as having a long-term physical or mental condition agreed to this statement, compared to 53.8% of those who did (**a 17.7 percentage point difference**).

**53.8%**

**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

**71.5%**

**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

When asked if they have **friends with whom they can share their joys and sorrows**, 77.7% of all YIS respondents said that they did. However, again, those identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition were less likely to agree to the statement compared to their peers (66.7% vs. 78.7%, **representing a percentage point difference of 12.0**).

**Long-Term Condition** **66.7%**

**No Long-Term Condition** **78.7%**

## SELF-ASSESSED MENTAL HEALTH

Respondents to the YIS were generally split between describing their mental health as more negative (45.1%) or more positive (54.9%). However, those identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition were almost three times less likely to describe their mental health as more positive compared to their peers (23.1% vs. 59.2%, **representing a 36.1 percentage point difference**).

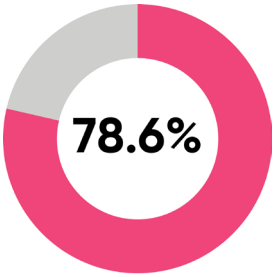
**23.1%**

**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

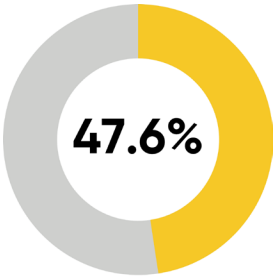
**59.2%**

**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

A similar trend is also noticed for 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 this case, youth identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition were **31 percentage points more likely than their peers to agree to this statement**. (78.6% vs. 47.6%).



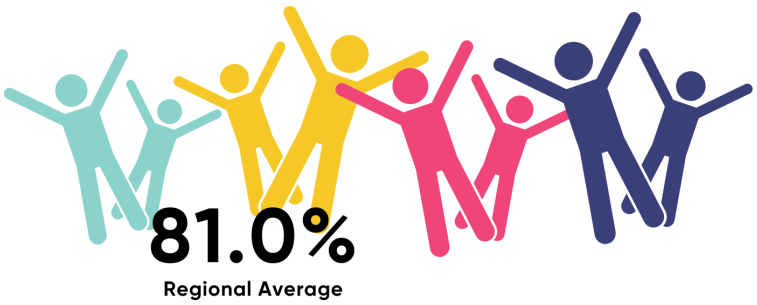

**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**




**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

## SELF-ASSESSED PHYSICAL HEALTH

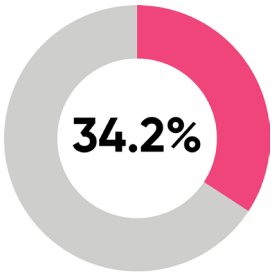
In terms of self-assessed physical health, 81.0% of all YIS respondents described their physical health as generally more positive than negative. While the majority of respondents across the two groups described their physical health as more positive, those who didn't identify as having a long-term physical or mental condition were **14.1 percentage points more likely to assess their physical health as more positive** (82.5% vs 68.4%).



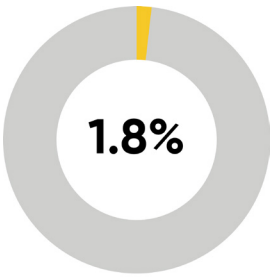

- **Long Term Physical or Mental Condition** **68.4%**
- **No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition** **82.5%**

## 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. More specifically, 5.8% of survey respondents indicated that they were discriminated against because of a disability. Youth identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition were **32.4 percentage points** more likely than their peers to express this form of discrimination (34.2% vs. 1.8%).




**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**




**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

In reference to experiences of bullying occurring at least two to three times a month, **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, it is revealed that those identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition were **three times more likely to express that they experienced these forms and frequency of bullying compared to their peers** (30.1% vs. 9.9%).

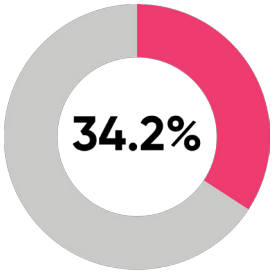
## MANAGING RESPONSIBILITIES & FEELING IN CONTROL

About four out of 10 YIS respondents (41.0%) expressed having total control over their lives. However, only 23.3% of those identifying as having a long-term physical or mental condition expressed agreement to this statement, in comparison to 43.4% of their peers (**a 20.1 percentage point difference**).

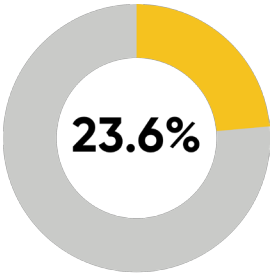
**23.3% OF RESPONDENTS WHO IDENTIFY AS HAVING A LONG-TERM PHYSICAL OR MENTAL CONDITION AGREE TO HAVING TOTAL CONTROL OVER THEIR LIVES.**

## GETTING INVOLVED

Just over half (51.7%) of all YIS respondents participated in at least one civic engagement activity in the past 12 months from when they filled out the survey. More specifically, almost a quarter of respondents (24.4%) participated in a local event in support of a charitable organization. However, those who identified as having a long-term physical or mental condition were **10.6 percentage points** more likely to indicate that they participated in a local event in support of a charitable organization compared to their peers (34.2% vs. 23.6%).




**Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**




**No Long-Term Physical or Mental Condition**

# THE ENVIRONMENT AROUND US

When thinking about the quality of the natural environment in their neighbourhood, almost three-quarters (74.0%) of all YIS respondents indicated that the quality was very high. Between the two groups, those identifying with having a long-term physical or mental condition were **13.6 percentage points** less likely to agree with this statement (62.1% vs. 75.7%).

**Long-Term Condition** **62.1%** **No Long-Term Condition** **75.7%**

A similar trend was found when comparing to see if there were differences in agreement to the statement "there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy the nature in my neighbourhood". Again we see a difference between the two groups, with those identifying with having a long-term physical or mental condition indicating less agreement (**11.9 percentage point difference**).

**Long-Term Condition** **65.5%** **No Long-Term Condition** **77.4%**

57.1% of YIS respondents agreed that the quality of recreation and culture facilities in their neighbourhood was very high. However, those identifying with having a long-term physical or mental condition were **12.2 percentage points** less likely to agree compared to their peers (40.0% vs. 52.2%).

**Long-Term Condition** **40.0%** **No Long-Term Condition** **52.2%**

Likewise, those identifying with having a long-term physical or mental condition were also **11.0 percentage points** less likely to indicate that recreation and culture facilities are easy for them to get to in comparison to their peers (47.4% vs. 58.1%).

**Long-Term Condition** **47.4%** **No Long-Term Condition** **58.1%**

**"NEED WAYS FOR DISABLED YOUTH TO BE INCLUDED AND SUPPORTED. WE ARE LEFT OUT AND NOT CONSIDERED (EVEN THIS SURVEY WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO DO WITHOUT MY PARENT HELPING AND MANY OF THE QUESTIONS WERE VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND)."**

**—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.