

2023 YOUTH IMPACT SURVEY SEXUAL ORIENTATION SNAPSHOT

The Youth Impact Survey (YIS) is our community's opportunity to hear directly from young people about their 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.

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, we are disaggregating the 2023 YIS across several 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, demographic categories. 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 9 to 12 year olds, as opposed to all youth ages 9 to 18.) This helps us reveal trends or patterns that might be hidden when focusing only on the total (i.e., aggregate) numbers.

It is important to remember that the data presented in this snapshot only reflects the responses from the children and youth who filled out the 2023 YIS. While we are excited to have received 1,876 responses in 2023, we also recognize that our survey does not capture the experiences and input of ALL children and youth in Waterloo Region. Percentages based on smaller number of respondents and comparisons between 2021 and 2023 survey responses should be interpreted with caution.

TAKING ACTION

The Youth Impact Survey lets us learn directly from young people in Waterloo Region about their well-being—how they're doing and what they're doing. Listening to what children and youth have to say is a good first step to making our community a better place.

After completing the survey, young people were asked what they think should happen next with the data. Here's what they think adults should do:

- **Make Changes:** Take the initiative to change programs to make things better for young people in Waterloo Region. Do their best to make our whole community better, including the places that young people use.
- **Understand Everyone:** Learn and better understand the diverse needs of young people in our community, and work at being inclusive.
- **Share Results:** Young people want us to share the results of the YIS with others in the community, including schools, community centres, government, and other institutions.
- **Reach Out:** Personally reach out to young people more often.

RESPONDENT BREAKDOWN

We asked youth 14–18 who filled out the survey to select their sexual orientation. From those responses (721), 65% identified as straight and 38% indicated another sexual orientation. This breaks down as follows:

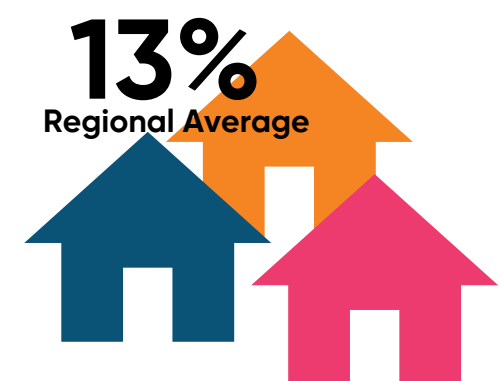
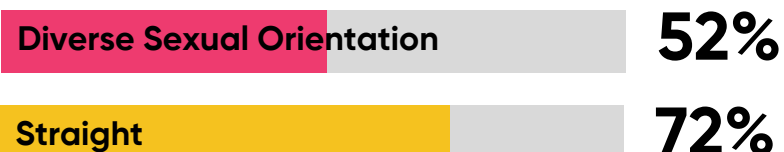
- 16% bisexual/parosexual
- 15% another sexual orientation (including: queer, two-spirit, don't know, questioning)
- 9% asexual
- 6% gay/lesbian

Please note that we grouped some of these to ensure larger sample sizes and less suppressed data.

SENSE OF BELONGING

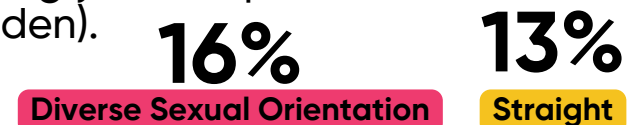
71% of all YIS respondents said they felt a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their community.

There is a 20 percentage point difference between respondents who identify as straight and those with a diverse sexual orientation.



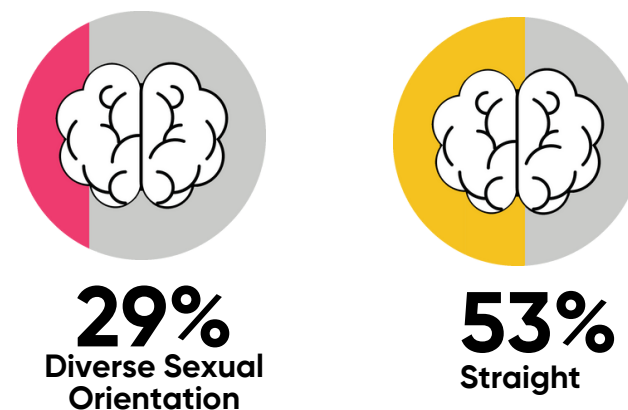
HOUSING (IN)SECURITY

Youth experiencing homelessness or hidden homelessness has increased from 8% in 2021 to 13% in 2023. In 2023, 16% of youth who identified as having a diverse sexual orientation and 13% of straight-identifying youth experienced homelessness (visible or hidden).



SELF-ASSESSED MENTAL HEALTH

55% of all survey respondents described their mental health as more positive, however it varied 24 percentage points between youth who identified as having a diverse sexual orientation and those who identified as straight.



LIFE SATISFACTION

78% of young people said they had at least a moderate level of life satisfaction—an increase (7 percentage points) from 2021. There is an 18 percentage point difference between straight youth and those with a diverse sexual orientation.



VALUED MEMBER OF COMMUNITY

51% of all respondents felt like they are a valued member of their community. This breaks down to 33% for those with a diverse sexual orientation and 50% for those who identified as straight.



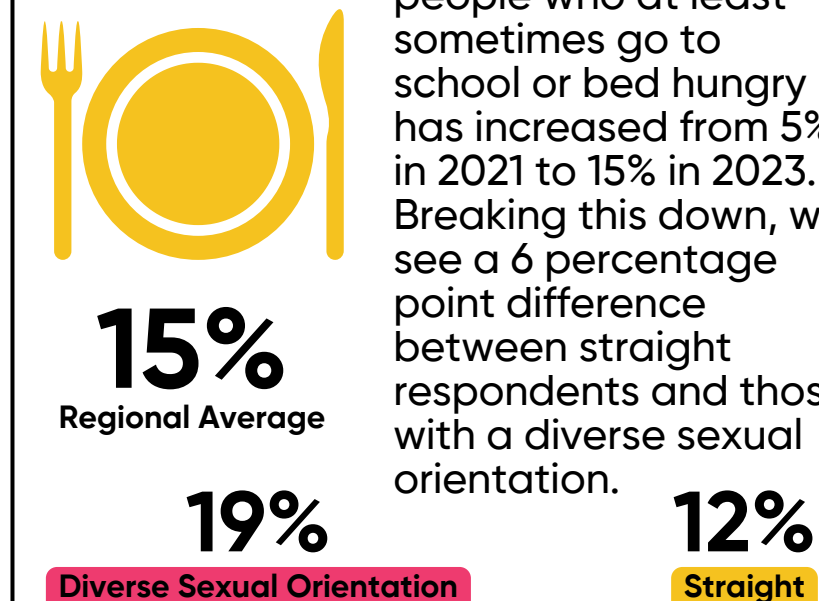
SELF-ASSESSED PHYSICAL HEALTH

While the majority of all respondents across Waterloo Region (76%) described their physical health as positive, we see that this number is notably lower for youth with a diverse sexual orientation.



FOOD (IN)SECURITY

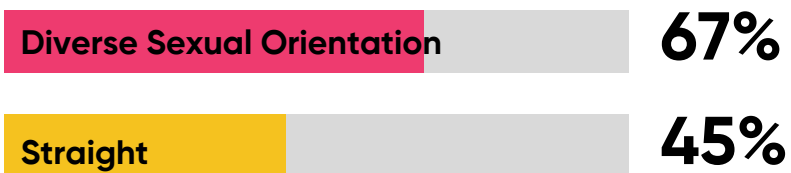
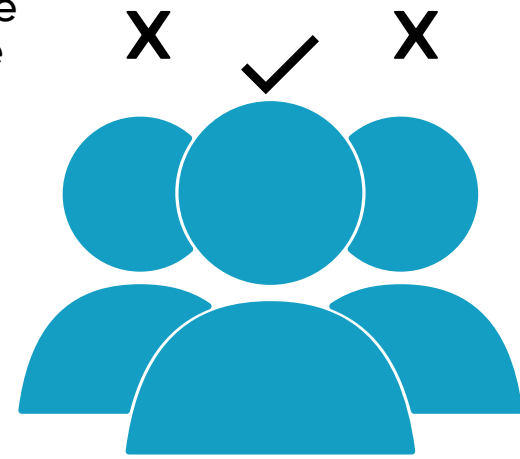
The number of young people who at least sometimes go to school or bed hungry has increased from 5% in 2021 to 15% in 2023. Breaking this down, we see a 6 percentage point difference between straight respondents and those with a diverse sexual orientation.





EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION

All together, 48% of young people said they had experienced at least one form of discrimination. Breaking this down, we see a 22 percentage point difference between respondents who said they had a diverse sexual orientation and those who identified as being straight.



POLICE



45% of youth said they felt comfortable reaching out to the police for help. However, only 27% of youth with a diverse sexual orientation felt comfortable, compared to 44% of straight youth, a difference of 17 percentage points.



FEELING ANXIOUS

33% of all survey respondents said they felt anxious more than once a week in the last 6 months, but we can see that when we break this down, there is a 32 percentage point difference between populations.



I GET THE EMOTIONAL HELP AND SUPPORT I NEED FROM MY FAMILY

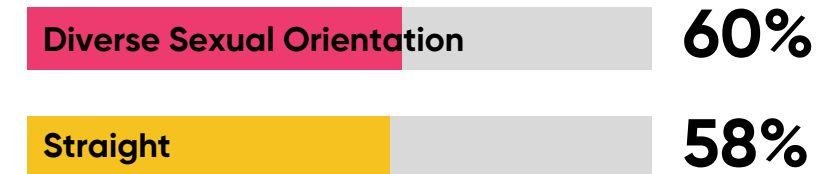


72% of young people agreed that they received the emotional support they needed from their family. Youth who identified as being straight were 13 percentage points more likely to agree with this statement compared to those with a diverse sexual orientation.



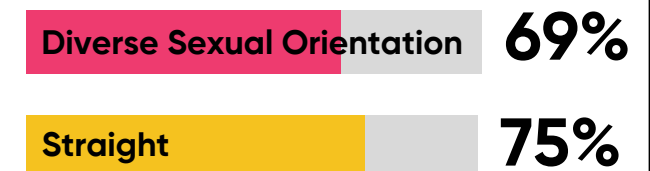
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

51% of youth said they had participated in at least 1 civic engagement in the last 12 months. This included participating in a public demonstration or protest, writing a message or speaking to a municipal official, writing the editor of a newspaper about a local issue, and more. Responses were similar between straight-identifying respondents and respondents with a diverse sexual orientation.



ACCEPTANCE FROM TEACHERS

Collectively, 74% of youth felt that their teachers accepted them as they were. Breaking this down, we see a slight difference between youth who identified as straight and those with a diverse sexual orientation.



SOME NOTES ON GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of self and the gender they feel like inside, which may or may not align with the gender they were assigned at birth. Sexuality refers to the types of people someone is attracted to.

Source: [Spectrum](#)

In the YIS, not all straight respondents identified as boy/girl, and not all gender diverse respondents have diverse sexual orientation. There were many different variations of sexual orientation or gender. Please see our Snapshot on Sexual Orientation for further disaggregated content.

FEELINGS OF LONELINESS

Collectively, 27% of all YIS respondents agreed with the statement "I often feel lonely". Breaking this down, we see that 48% of youth with diverse sexual orientations said they often felt lonely, compared with 28% of straight youth. There is a 20 percentage point difference between populations.



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