

# 2021 Child and Youth Well-being Survey Data Brief Report



Initiative pour les  
**enfants** et les **jeunes**  
*Mieux grandir*



Ottawa **Child**  
& **Youth** Initiative  
*Growing Up Great*

## CONTENT WARNING

The following 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:

Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868

Youth Services Bureau: 613-260-2360 or 1-877-377-7775 (toll free for Eastern Ontario), or [chat.ysb.ca](https://chat.ysb.ca)

Distress Centre: 613-238-3311 or 1-866-996-0991 (toll free for Eastern Ontario)

TAO Tel-Aide: 613-741-6433, 1-800-567-9699 (toll free)

Counseling Connect: [www.counsellingconnect.org](https://www.counsellingconnect.org)

[1Call1Click.ca](https://1Call1Click.ca)

# 2021 DATA BRIEF REPORT



## WHAT IS THE CHILD & YOUTH WELL-BEING SURVEY?

The Ottawa Child & Youth Initiative (OCYI) partnered with UNICEF Canada, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation to develop and pilot the Child & Youth Well-being Survey. 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 survey was a chance to learn directly from children and youth in Ottawa 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. Launched in spring of 2021, children and youth between the ages of 9 and 18 were invited to participate in the survey pilot to share insights into their own well-being and provide feedback on the survey tool, with about 600 youth participating.

OCYI is a network of 80+ organizations and agencies across Ottawa with a shared vision to help children and youth “grow up great!” In 2021, OCYI adopted a strategic direction around supporting the mental health and addiction needs of children, youth, and their families, built on the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion. The Child & Youth Well-being Survey brings a voice to children and youth in Ottawa which will guide OCYI in advancing this strategic direction.



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

In 2021, OCYI partnered with UNICEF Canada and the Canadian Index of Well-being to survey young people in Ottawa. The Child & Youth Well-being Survey is a way for OCYI to hear the voices of Ottawa's children and youth, and potentially compare their responses to the national picture. While OCYI's partners have multiple lenses to examine the lives of children and youth, a key component of understanding well-being is to ask individuals about their own experience. Their responses to the survey can be paired with data from other experiences to give a more well-rounded look into the lives of Ottawa's children and youth.

## WHY IS THIS DATA IMPORTANT RIGHT NOW?

The purpose of the Child & Youth Well-being Survey Data Brief Series is to highlight key well-being data that was shared from young people in Ottawa in spring 2021, during the second year of 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. Specifically, we can understand how the on-going pandemic is affecting children and youth in Ottawa, and thus tailor recovery from the pandemic to their now altered needs to grow up great!

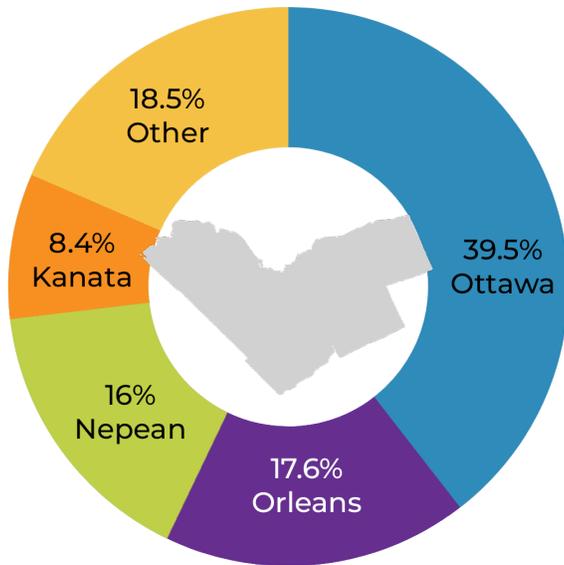
## LIMITATIONS

When reading these Data Briefs, there are some important survey limitations to consider when reviewing the results. First, the survey was administered during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, a little over a year after pandemic restrictions initially started in our region. Further, at the time of data collection, Ontario's publicly funded schools were all engaged in virtual learning only, as lockdowns restricted in-person learning. This is important to keep in mind when comparing results to other data sources collected prior to the pandemic.

While over 600 children and youth participated in the Ottawa survey, it is not a fully representative sample of nine to 18 year olds in Ottawa. The pandemic and virtual-only schools limited methods for advertising the survey. Consequently, some groups are under-represented in the responses, so we cannot make comparisons between some groups of interest. Therefore, OCYI considers the results shared in these Data Briefs to be conversation starters rather than final conclusions.

## GEOGRAPHY

Children and youth between the ages of nine and 18 from the City of Ottawa, as well as surrounding municipalities were invited to participate in the Child & Youth Well-being Survey. A combination of direct contact and social media was used to invite them to complete the survey online. In total, 620 children and youth participated.



## AGE

Age	%	Grade	%
9	5.9%	2	0.7%
10	8.0%	3	2.8%
11	6.5%	4	4.1%
12	5.1%	5	9.0%
13	5.1%	6	5.7%
14	16.2%	7	3.9%
15	13.9%	8	4.8%
16	16.2%	9	19.7%
17	17.1%	10	16.4%
18	6.1%	11	17.7%
		12	15.3%

## COUNTRY OF BIRTH

The majority of respondents were born in Canada, 82.4%, with 17.6% born outside of Canada. For respondents who were born outside of Canada, the most frequent countries of birth were: China (9.5%), United States (8.3%) Burundi (7.1%), and République Démocratique du Congo (7.1%).



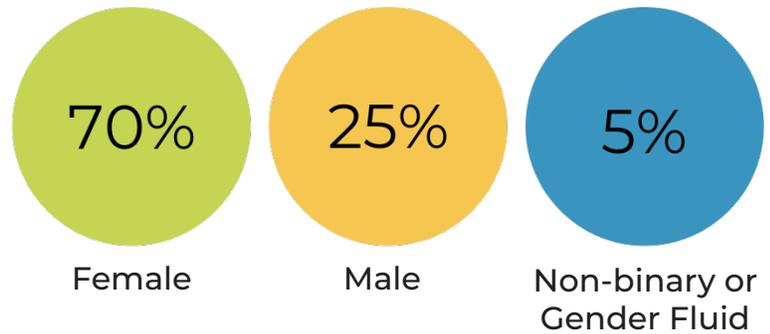
82.4%



17.6%

## SEX AND GENDER

The majority of participants indicated their assigned sex at birth was female (76%, male 24%). Gender identity indicated that the majority of participants identified as female (70%), with 25% male, and 5% indicated non-binary or gender fluid.



## LANGUAGE

As a bilingual region, it was important that the survey was available in both English and French. While there was no question directly asking a respondent's preferred language, we used the proxy of which language a participant completed the survey. 68.1% of participants completed the survey in English, while 31.9% completed it in French.



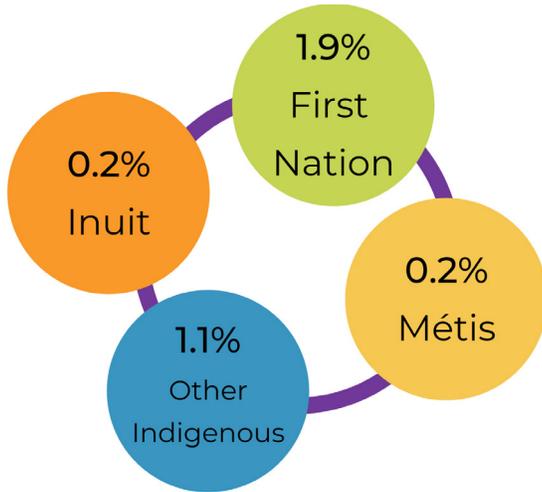
68.1%



31.9%

## FIRST NATION, MÉTIS, AND INUIT

3.4% of respondents who completed the survey question identified as First Nation, Métis, Inuit, or another Indigenous identity. An additional 3.0% of responses indicated they were not sure or did not know, while 3.2% of respondents preferred not to say.



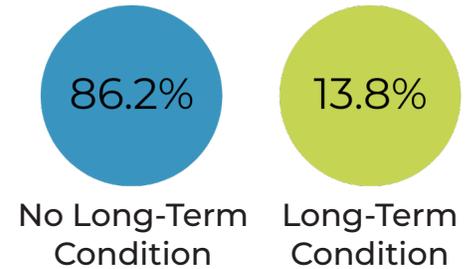
## RACIAL BACKGROUND

The majority of responses (64.8%) to the survey came from children and youth who reported their racial background as White. Note that percentages are of the number of responses, as that respondents could select more than one option.

Racial Background	%
White	64.8%
Black	10.8%
Middle Eastern	8.5%
East Asian	7.9%
South Asian	5.7%
Latino	3.7%
Southeast Asian	1.8%
Indigenous	1.0%
Another racial identity	3.0%

## LONG-TERM PHYSICAL OR MENTAL CONDITION

13.8% 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.



## HOUSEHOLD TYPE

The majority of respondents (78.5%) were living in two parent/guardian households at the time of the survey. 3.6% of respondents reported another type of household, which included shared time between multiple households.



# WE BELONG



UNICEF Canada defines belonging as “feeling loved and supported and having mutually caring and respectful relationships”.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> When children build healthy relationships at home, school, with friends and in the community, it contributes to their overall well-being.

## WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

### SENSE OF BELONGING

63.4% of Children & Youth Well-being Survey respondents reported feeling a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging. A higher percentage of children and youth living with a chronic illness or disability reported a somewhat weak or a very weak sense of belonging compared to those without a chronic illness or disability.

**78.0% OF FRENCH LANGUAGE RESPONDENTS FELT A VERY STRONG OR SOMEWHAT STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING, WHILE ONLY 56.7% ENGLISH LANGUAGE RESPONDENTS DID.**

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF Canada (2020). Worlds Apart: Canadian Companion to UNICEF Report Card 16. UNICEF Canada, Toronto.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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](https://oneyouth.unicef.ca/sites/default/files/2019-08/2019_Baseline_Report_Canadian_Index_of_Child_and_Youth_Well-being.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> 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](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/cmoh_19/cmoh_19.pdf)

## LONELINESS

Feelings of loneliness were very common among participants, with over half (56.6%) of respondents reporting feeling lonely on at least a regular basis.

I feel lonely...



## SOCIAL SUPPORT FROM FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND THE COMMUNITY

The Child & Youth Well-being Survey asked children and youth if and how they felt supported by family, friends, and the community.



63.0%  
felt they get the  
emotional support  
and help they  
need from their  
family



68.7%  
felt their friends  
really tried to help  
them



86.9%  
felt there are people  
they can count on in  
an emergency



84.1%  
felt they had a strong  
emotional bond with at  
least one other person

## 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.



**78.6% OF RESPONDENTS FELT THAT  
THEIR TEACHERS ACCEPT THEM AS  
THEY ARE.**

**74.3% REPORTED THAT THEY ARE  
ENCOURAGED TO EXPRESS THEIR  
OWN VIEWS IN CLASS.**

## EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION

The Child & Youth Well-being Survey asked children and youth about their experiences of discrimination in the last year. Of note, experiences of discrimination were higher for those assigned female at birth (20.2%) than those assigned male (6.3%), and among those reporting living with a chronic illness or disability (32.2%) compared to those not living with chronic illness or disability (3.9%).

Experienced discrimination due to...	%
Your physical appearance	21.4%
Your age	18.3%
Your ethnicity or culture	16.4%
Your sex	16.2%
Your race or colour	15.7%
Your sexual orientation	12.1%
Your gender identity	9.6%
Your religion	9.2%
Your language	8.0%
A disability	7.6%



# WE ARE HEALTHY - MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH



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.”<sup>5</sup>

## WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

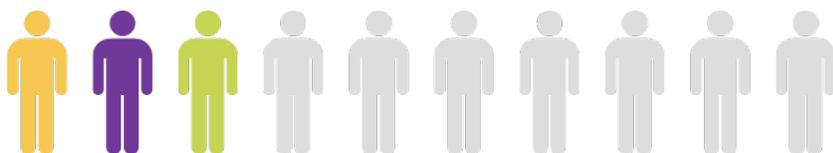
Children and youth who have good mental and emotional health are able to understand and manage their own emotions and those of others. This includes being able to cope with challenges they experience in life and build healthy relationships with others including peers and adults.

In addition, children and youth who have good social and emotional skills have greater success in school and in life more generally. 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. 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.

## WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

### SELF ASSESSED MENTAL HEALTH

Just three in 10 (28.3%) of respondents reported their mental health as very good or excellent.



**28.3% VERY GOOD  
OR EXCELLENT  
MENTAL HEALTH**

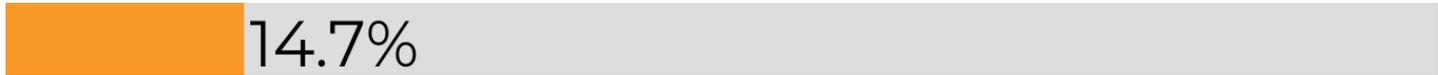
Respondents who identified as male rated their mental health higher than those who identified as female. Respondents who completed the survey in French rated their mental health higher than those who completed the survey in English.

5. Felmen, A. (2020, April 13). What is Mental Health? Medical News Today. Available online: <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/154543>

## LIVING WITH A CHRONIC ILLNESS OR DISABILITY

Children and youth with chronic illness or disability rated their mental health lower than respondents who do not report living with chronic illness or disability.

Living **WITH** a chronic illness or disability and rated mental health as very good or excellent



Living **WITHOUT** a chronic illness or disability and rated mental health as very good or excellent



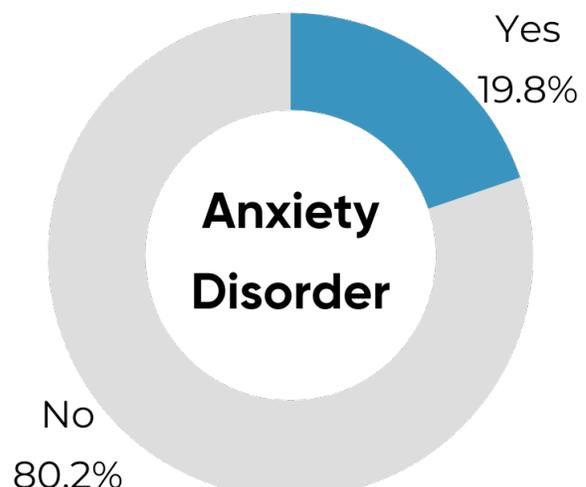
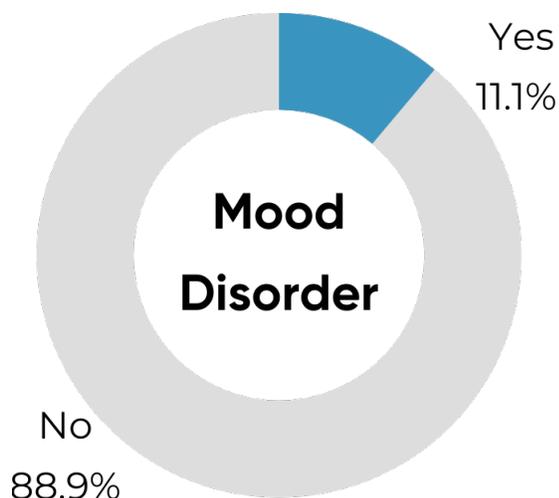
## FEELING SAD OR HOPELESS

When asked about feelings of sadness or hopelessness almost every day for two weeks or more in a row to the point that it stopped them from doing some usual activities:

**52.3% OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY FELT SAD OR HOPELESS SEVERAL DAYS IN A ROW.**

## DIAGNOSED MOOD OR ANXIETY DISORDER

Just over one in 10 (11.1%) of respondents reported that they have been diagnosed with a mood disorder. Almost one in five (19.8%) of respondents reported that they have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.



## RISKY LIFESTYLE AND BEHAVIOURS

The majority of youth who responded had never engaged in the risky behaviours listed: alcohol, cannabis, e-cigarettes, taking prescription medications to get high, or cigarettes.

Risky Behaviour	Never	1 to 9 days	10 to 29 days	Every day
Drank alcohol	88.8%	9.8%	1.2%	0.2%
Prescription medications to get high	95.0%	3.2%	1.0%	0.8%
Use e-cigarettes	96.8%	1.0%	1.0%	1.2%
Took cannabis	96.8%	1.4%	1.0%	0.8%
Gambled for money	97.6%	1.8%	0.6%	0.0%
Smoked cigarettes	98.0%	1.6%	0.4%	0.0%
Took illegal drugs	98.4%	1.2%	0.4%	0.0%

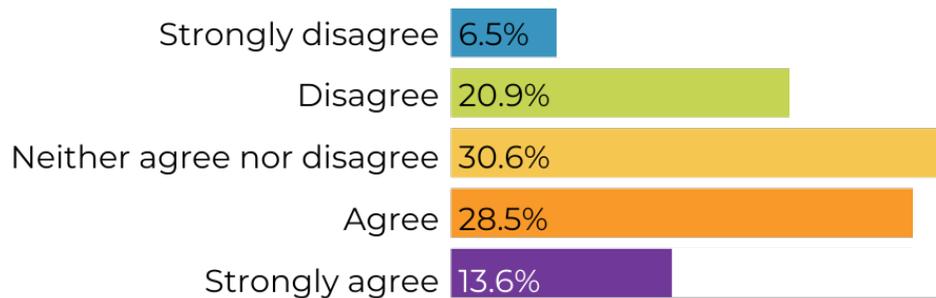
**“A lot of anti-drug/smoking campaigns are mostly just adults talking to other adults...It might be better if instead, they were talking to us, instead of about/over us.”**

- Survey Respondent

## STRESS AND SCHOOL

The Child & Youth Well-being Survey occurred in the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, in a school year that saw a mix of in person, hybrid, and fully remote schedules. At the time of the survey, Ontario was under stay-at-home orders with schools fully shifted to online learning. In light of this, 42.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that school work is felt to be more than they can handle. Further, 67.9% felt some or a lot of pressure from school work, while only 5.6% responded “not at all.”

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



# WE ARE HEALTHY - PHYSICAL HEALTH

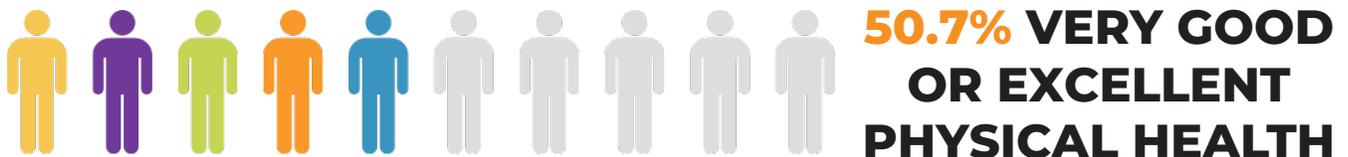


Physical health refers to our bodies, how we take care of our bodies, and our capacity to participate and perform in everyday activities that are right for us. It includes physical activity, healthy eating, and access to care. Health is shaped from birth, and is influenced not only by choices made, but conditions children and youth grow up in, and access to resources and appropriate health care services. 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.

## WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

### CHILDREN AND YOUTH SELF-ASSESSED PHYSICAL HEALTH

Half (50.7%) of Child & Youth Well-being Survey respondents self-reported their physical health as very good or excellent.



Respondents who identified as male reported higher physical health than those who identified as female. Respondents who completed the survey in French rated their physical health higher than those who completed the survey in English.

### LIVING WITH A CHRONIC ILLNESS OR DISABILITY

Children and youth with chronic illness or disability rated their physical health lower than respondents who do not report living with chronic illness or disability.

Living **WITH** a chronic illness or disability and rated physical health as very good or excellent

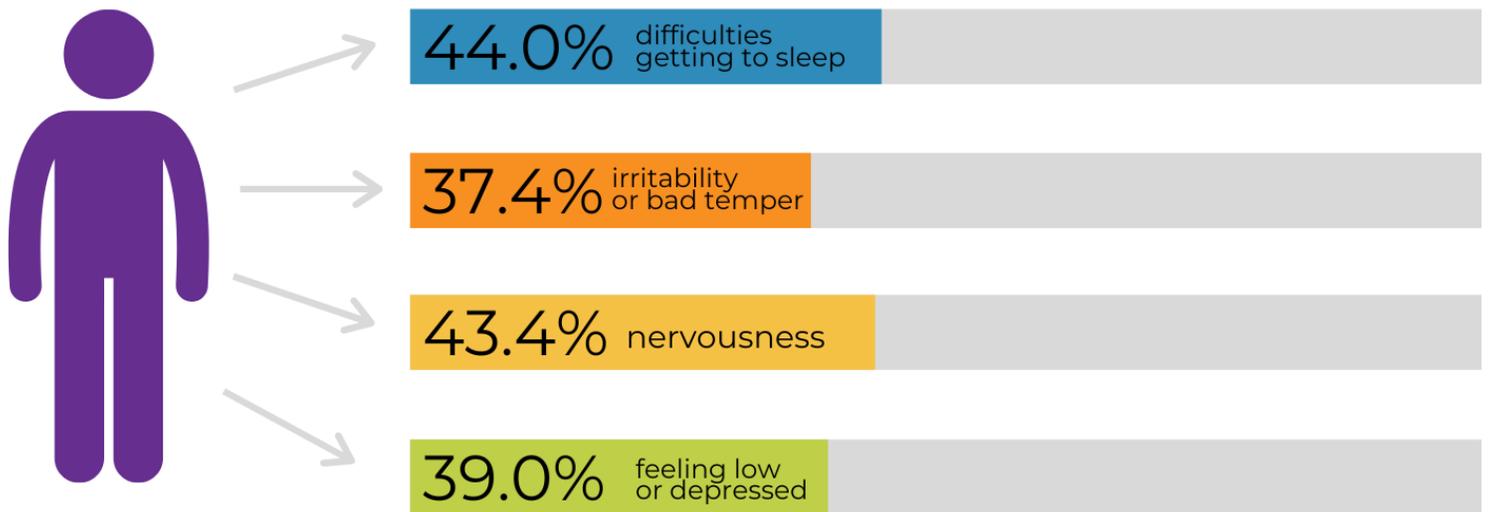


Living **WITHOUT** a chronic illness or disability and rated physical health as very good or excellent



## SELF-REPORTED PHYSICAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS

When asked about their experiences with particular health symptoms, respondents reported the following more than once a week or about every day.



## SLEEP

The survey asked children and youth about their sleep habits. Insufficient sleep is often associated with poor performance and can impact productivity throughout the day. The average reported amount of sleep per day was 7.82 hours. Additionally, 57.2% of respondents indicated that when they need more time, they tend to cut back on sleep, although 64.9% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have enough time to get enough sleep/rest.

**30.3% OF RESPONDENTS NOTED THAT THEY HAD TROUBLE STAYING AWAKE DURING THE DAY.**



# WE ARE LEARNING



Learning begins from birth, in families, in communities, and in cultures.<sup>6</sup> Often we think of learning in relation to school, although learning 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.<sup>7</sup> Settings in which youth feel comfortable and valued create opportunities to focus on personal growth, passions, and abilities.<sup>8</sup> Children and youth who are engaged in their learning, and provided with opportunities to set their own goals, develop concepts of shared responsibility and accountability applied in later life.<sup>9</sup> 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. When and how children and youth were able to learn was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is now important to understand how these changes affect their learning and well-being.

**“I NEED TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL.”**

**- Survey Respondent**

## WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

### LEARNING AT SCHOOL

Due to the ongoing pandemic, most respondents reported learning at school through either a mix of in person and online learning (44.7%) or just online learning (27.9%).



<sup>6</sup> UNICEF Canada, (2019)

<sup>7</sup> 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.edu/www/files/files/Youth-that-Thrive-Report\(1\).pdf](http://educ.queensu.ca/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.edu/www/files/files/Youth-that-Thrive-Report(1).pdf); Aston, 2018

<sup>8</sup> 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/jiincho/Downloads/FrancineJoselowskyJournalarticleNASSP.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Joselowsky, 2007; UNICEF, (2019).

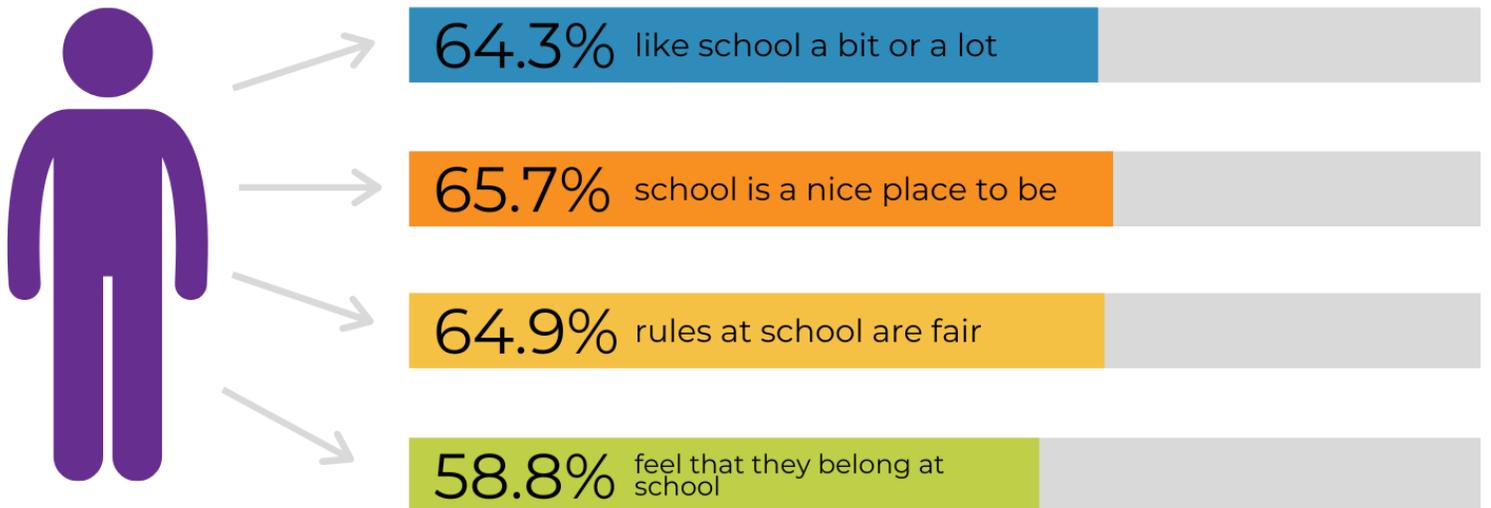
## STRESS AND SCHOOL

About two-thirds of Child & Youth Well-being Survey respondents reported feeling some or a lot of pressure stemming from assigned school work.



**42.1% OF RESPONDENTS AGREED OR STRONGLY AGREED THAT ASSIGNED SCHOOL WORK IS MORE THAN THEY CAN HANDLE.**

## FEELINGS ABOUT SCHOOL



## LEARNING EXPERIENCES OUTSIDE OF THE CLASSROOM

The Child & Youth Well-being Survey asked children and youth about their learning experiences outside of the classroom, both at school or outside of school, over the past 12 months. This time period roughly matched the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, during which extracurricular activities were severely impacted and restricted.

<b>Group or activity involvement in the past 12 months</b>	<b>Outside of School</b>	<b>At School</b>
Sports team	34.4%	16.8%
Church, religious, or spiritual group	27.8%	10.0%
Arts group	20.2%	20.0%
Community groups	14.4%	6.7%
Another activity (e.g., model building, chess)	23.9%	21.7%

**“I WANT SCHOOLS TO REOPEN BECAUSE I CAN’T SEE MY FRIENDS AND IT’S HARD FOR ME TO SIT ALL DAY”**

**- Survey Respondent**



# WE ARE PARTICIPATING



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.”<sup>10</sup> 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 decisions. 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.<sup>11</sup> Opportunities for participation early in life lead to stronger connections to community and stronger long-term civic engagement.

**“MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE INVOLVED WITHIN COMMUNITY”**

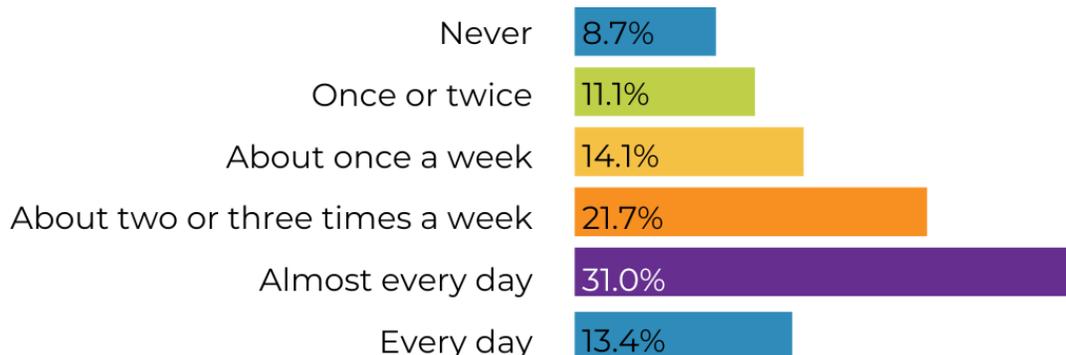
-Survey Respondent

## WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

### MANAGING RESPONSIBILITIES

When asked about managing responsibilities, less than half (44.4%) of respondents felt good about being able to manage responsibilities in their daily life, every day or almost every day, within the past month.

**In the past month, how often did you feel good at managing the responsibilities in you?**



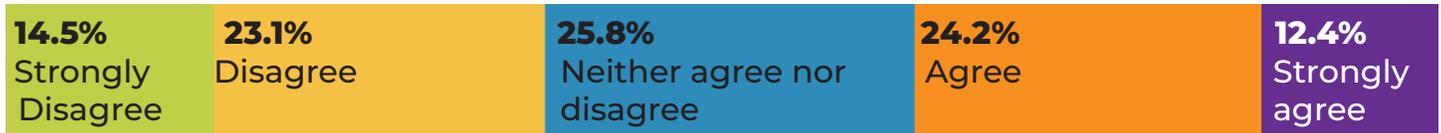
<sup>10</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019), p 33  
<sup>11</sup> Joselowsky, 2007; UNICEF, (2019).

## FEELING IN CONTROL

When asked to assess their level of agreement about control in their lives, survey respondents had this to say:

**36.6% AGREE TO THE STATEMENT “I HAVE TOTAL CONTROL OVER MY LIFE” WHILE 37.6% DISAGREE**

**I have total control over my life:**



**HALF OF PARTICIPANTS (49.9%) STRONGLY AGREED OR AGREED THAT THEY HAD CONTROL OVER THE ISSUES THAT MATTERED TO THEM.**

**I have control over the issues that matter to me:**



## SELF EXPRESSION

Participation helps children and youth develop their capacity and confidence to express themselves.



**71.9%**  
felt able to express themselves with friends



**73.0%**  
felt that when they spoke, someone in their family listens



**62.7%**  
felt able to express themselves with family

# WE ARE FREE TO PLAY



According to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the right to play refers to rest, leisure, recreational activities and play appropriate to the age of the young person.<sup>12</sup> 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. Participation in social and culture activities are also included.<sup>13</sup>

## 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.<sup>14</sup> Play and leisure have also been linked to positive physical health, psychological well-being, and supporting young people in feeling a sense of connection and coping with stress.<sup>15</sup>

**“LET US PLAY TOGETHER AGAIN – COVID IS REALLY HARD AND SAD AND LONELY.”**

**- Survey Respondent**

## WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

### TECHNOLOGY AND MEDIA USE

Media and technology use is one way for young people to engage in play and leisure activities.

Media Activity	Percent	Average number of hours per day
Watch television, DVDs, or live streaming	90.5%	2.3
Search the internet for interest	76.5%	1.5
Use social media to connect with friends	74.0%	1.8
Play computer/video games	62.1%	1.4

<sup>12</sup> 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/professional-interest/pages/crc.aspx>

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019).

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019).

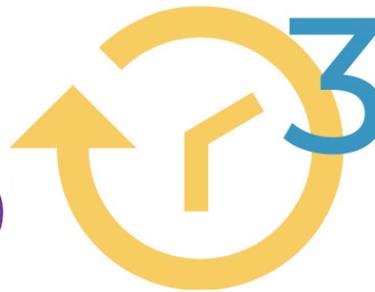
<sup>15</sup> Shin, K & You, S. (2013). Leisure Type, Leisure Satisfaction and Adolescents' Psychological Wellbeing. Journal of Pacific RIM Psychology, 7(2), 53-62. Available: [https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/BEBF7723CC9F9D737FD9FB97C743DFD0/S1834490913000068a.pdf/leisure\\_type\\_leisure\\_satisfaction\\_and\\_adolescents\\_psychological\\_wellbeing.pdf](https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/BEBF7723CC9F9D737FD9FB97C743DFD0/S1834490913000068a.pdf/leisure_type_leisure_satisfaction_and_adolescents_psychological_wellbeing.pdf)

## 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):

### Outdoor Activities

**47.8%**

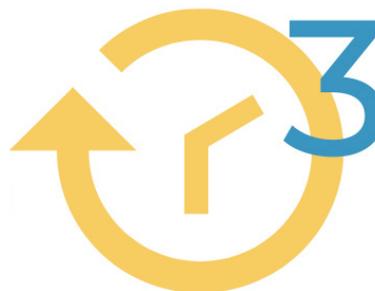


**3** hours or more per week

Weekly light physical activity (e.g., walking, bicycling) was reported by 88.6% of respondents, for an average of four hours a week. Over half of respondents (55.3%), reported vigorous exercise (e.g. exercising, going to the gym), averaging 2.12 hours per week. When asked how often they spend doing activities on their own (outside of homework or chores) including activities such as playing, reading, or listening to music:

### Individual Activities

**57.1%**



**3** hours or more per week

## IMPACTS OF COVID-19

COVID-19 and social distancing safety precautions have had an impact on young people's opportunities to participate in activities. About eight in ten (79.6%) of respondents reported that because of COVID-19 and social distancing their participation had gone down a little or a lot. Alternatively, less than one in ten (9.1%) respondents noted that their participation has gone up a little or a lot. The decrease in participation was greater for respondents completing the survey in English, over French, with 84% of English responses indicating participation has gone down a little or a lot, compared to 70.5% of French responses.



# WE ARE CONNECTED TO OUR ENVIRONMENT



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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup>

## 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.<sup>18</sup> Fundamental to their health and development is having access to clean air and drinking water. When these essential elements are not readily available, it can have a negative impact on both their physical health and overall well-being.<sup>19</sup>

**“PLANT. MORE. TREES.”**

**-Survey Respondent**

## WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

### PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Child & Youth Survey of Well-being respondents reported a high degree of feeling a personal responsibility to help protect the natural environment, with 68.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

**68.7%**



Only one in five (19.9%) of respondents regularly participates in events organized by local groups to protect the natural environment.



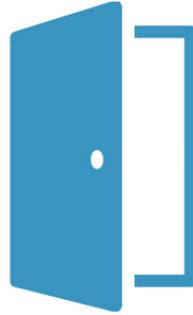
<sup>16</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019)  
<sup>17</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019)  
<sup>18</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019)  
<sup>19</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019)

## NATURAL AND BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

Enjoying natural environments was high among survey respondents, with 75.4% reporting that there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy nature in their neighbourhood, and 78.8% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the quality of the natural environment in their neighbourhood is very high. It is important to note that at the time of the survey, indoor recreation was severely limited due to pandemic lockdowns, and it was spring.



**75.4%**  
Opportunities to enjoy  
nature



**62.3%**  
Easy access to recreation  
and culture facilities



**50.0%**  
Quality of recreation  
facilities in their community  
is very high

**“WE COULD ADD MORE PARKS. THEY MAKE ME  
HAPPY :)”**

**-Survey Respondent**



# WE ARE PROTECTED



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.”<sup>20</sup> “They should not be exposed to bullying, discrimination, exploitation, serious crime or disproportionate risk of harm – physically, socially, emotionally or psychologically.”<sup>21</sup> When children and youth do not feel that they are safe or protected, it is important that there are resources or trusted adults 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.”<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup>

### **“TAKE BULLYING MORE SERIOUSLY”**

**- Survey Respondent**



<sup>20</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019) p.41

<sup>21</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019) p.41

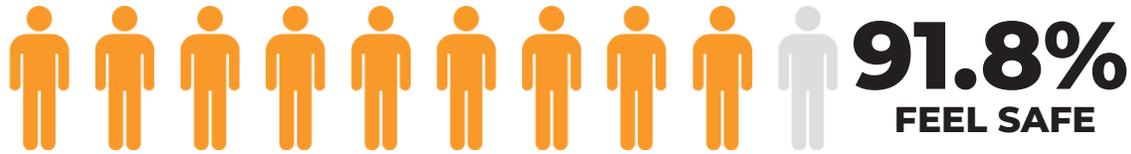
<sup>22</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019) p.43

<sup>23</sup> 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

When asked how safe they feel from crime in their neighbourhood, 91.8% of respondents felt reasonably safe or very safe.



## SCHOOL SAFETY

Of the kinds of bullying surveyed, the most common form reported by survey respondents was “being left out of things on purpose, excluded me from their group of friends, or completely ignored me.”

**35.4% OF RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCED THIS TYPE OF BULLYING AT LEAST ONCE IN THE PAST COUPLE OF MONTHS.**

## PERSONAL SAFETY



Safety with adults, whether a relative or caregiver, is important for children and youth.

Nearly three in 10 (**28.5%**) of respondents reported that in the past five years an adult has called them names that made them feel bad.

About one in 10 (**10.3%**) reported being physically hurt by hitting, pushing, or grabbing by an adult in the past five years.

# WE ARE SECURE



“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.”<sup>24</sup> Income is an important social determinant of health as it impacts food security, housing, education, and early child development.<sup>25</sup>

## 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.<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup>

## WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

### HOUSING SECURITY

Among Child & Youth Survey of Well-being participants, nearly one in 10 (9.3%) reported having experienced housing insecurity.

Experience	Percent
Have been homeless (i.e., had to live in a shelter, on the street, or in an abandoned building)	2.9%
Have had to temporarily live with family or friends, in a car, or anywhere else because had nowhere else to live	6.4%



<sup>24</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019) p.29

<sup>25</sup> Raphael et al. (2020)

<sup>26</sup> Raphael et al. (2020)

<sup>27</sup> UNICEF Canada (2019)

## FOOD SECURITY

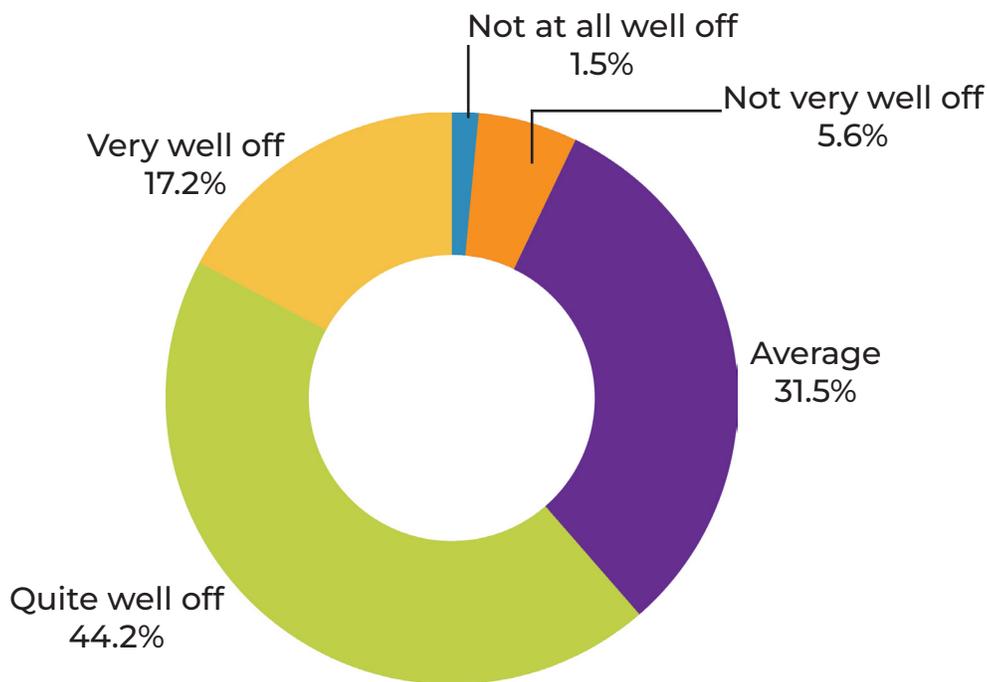
Hunger is an indicator of other factors that affect well-being, like poverty or family stress.

### **OF RESPONDENTS, 8.0% REPORTED GOING TO SCHOOL OR BED HUNGRY DUE TO NOT ENOUGH FOOD AT HOME.**

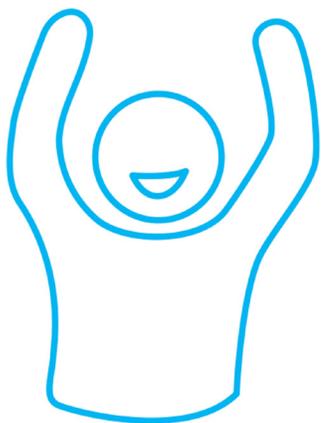
In response to a question about the experience of not eating for a whole day because there was not enough money for food, 3.0% reported this was sometimes or often true.

## MATERIAL SECURITY

When asked how well off their family is thought to be, 61.4% reported to be above average.



# WE ARE HAPPY AND RESPECTED



“Young people’s sense of well-being – how they tell us they are – is ultimately how we know how Canada measures up”.<sup>28</sup> 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.<sup>29</sup>

## WHY IT MATTERS TO WELL-BEING

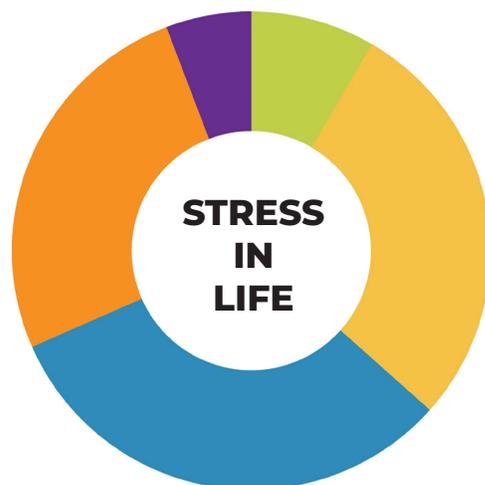
Happiness can be understood as a general descriptor of life satisfaction; and “life satisfaction is a strong proxy indicator of overall well-being.”<sup>30</sup> It is important that children and youth know their opinions and contributions are being listened to and valued. Feeling cared about, accepted, and respected contributes to a young person’s sense of belonging.<sup>31</sup>

## WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

### STRESS IN LIFE

When asked about daily stress, 36.8% of respondents indicated life was extremely or quite a bit stressful.

- **8.4%** Extremely stressful
- **28.2%** Quite a bit stressful
- **31.8%** A bit stressful
- **25.8%** Not very stressful
- **5.8%** Not stressful at all



### LIFE SATISFACTION

When asked to rate their life satisfaction in general, over half (55.8%) rated at least a moderate level of satisfaction, while 64.4% at least moderately agreed that they are living their best possible life right now. There was an interesting interaction, based on the language the survey was completed in, and these two factors. Respondents who took the survey in French reported a lower life satisfaction, while at the same time reporting a higher assessment of living the best possible life right now.



28 UNICEF Canada (2019) p.19

29 UNICEF Canada (2019)

30 UNICEF Canada (2019) p.19

31 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>



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