



# City of Ottawa | State of Child and Youth Safety and Well-Being

Research Brief

July 2024



## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Methodology & Framework for Analysis.....	4
Research Questions .....	4
Framework for Analysis – SGBA+ and Intersectionality.....	4
Data Limitations.....	5
Term Definitions.....	6
Demographic Profile of Children and Youth in the City of Ottawa.....	7
Children and Youth Population Trends.....	7
Where Children and Youth Reside.....	8
Educational Attainment.....	10
Increasingly Diverse Communities.....	11
Risk of Poverty.....	13
Risk of Housing Insecurity and Homelessness.....	15
The State of Child and Youth Safety and Well-Being in the City of Ottawa.....	16
Concerning Trends in Children and Youth Well-being.....	16
Factors That Affect Safety, Security and Belonging in The City.....	23
The Child and Youth Service Sector – A Snapshot.....	27
Youth Services Sector Strengths and Challenges.....	35
Conclusion.....	35
References.....	37

## Executive Summary

The City of Ottawa (“the city” or “Ottawa”) aims to enhance children and youth's well-being and safety by supporting the development and delivery of culturally relevant programs, addressing both preventative and intervention factors.

This research brief aims to offer an in-depth understanding of the current state of safety and well-being among Ottawa’s children and youth population.

The first section of the paper examines the demographic distribution and socio-economic conditions of this group, alongside the specific challenges they face, such as food insecurity, homelessness, and poverty.

The second section of the paper delves into the current well-being and safety state of this group, and explores the various factors impacting their lives, ranging from physical, emotional, and online safety to broader considerations of health, education, and social inclusion at different developmental phases.

Incorporating Sex- and Gender-Based Analysis Plus (SGBA+) and Intersectionality lenses wherever possible, this paper seeks to capture the diverse experiences of Ottawa's youth. It is important to note, however, that the breadth and depth of the analysis presented are inherently tied to the availability and comprehensiveness of existing datasets, which may not fully capture the nuanced realities faced by all groups.

Fostering a secure, inclusive, and equitable environment for all children and youth in Ottawa necessitates enhanced coordination, collaboration, data sharing, and financial sustainability within the children and youth development ecosystem.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- ✓ The children and youth population (0-24) in Ottawa is very diverse and represented 29.30% of the total population in 2021.
- ✓ Ottawa’s general population is projected to grow the fastest in Eastern Ontario, with over 50% projected growth in the number of children aged 0-16 over 2022-2046.
- ✓ Education attainment and outcomes vary significantly across neighbourhoods, indicating considerable disparities.
- ✓ Children and youth in Ottawa are increasingly at risk of poverty, food insecurity, and homelessness, which adversely affects their developmental journey.
- ✓ The early stages of development (ages 0-6) are crucial for children, with the surrounding environment playing a significant role in their upbringing.
- ✓ Mental health issues are on the rise among children and youth.
- ✓ Children and youth experience various forms of violence, including racism, lateral and systemic violence, bullying and cyberbullying, gender-based violence, and criminal activities. Such exposure undermines their sense of safety, security, and belonging, with equity-deserving and equity-denied disproportionately more at risk.

## Introduction

In its continuous efforts to enhance the safety and well-being of children and youth in Ottawa, the city has been allocated funding for the Priority Neighbourhood Youth Initiative through the Building Safer Communities Fund. This funding aims to support ongoing engagement with children and youth and to develop strategies that cater to their diverse needs through place-based and evidence-informed interventions.

With work currently underway within the city's Anti-Racism Strategy and the Community Safety and Well-being Plan, along with initiatives led by various community agencies and organizations, this paper provides data and context complementary to these efforts.

The intended use of this research is to inform policy development and service provision to meet the unique needs of Ottawa's children and youth. By adopting an intersectional lens and working to dismantle systemic barriers, the city can achieve improved health outcomes, ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities regardless of socio-economic status, place of residence, race, gender, sexual orientation, or other factors. This approach aims to address immediate issues and lay the groundwork for lasting positive changes in the lives of Ottawa's children and youth.

### Paper Objectives

To gain a thorough understanding of the complex challenges and barriers faced by children and youth in Ottawa, this paper aims to achieve the following:

- **Assess the Current State:** Provide a comprehensive assessment of the safety and well-being of children and youth in Ottawa, focusing on socio-economic indicators, access to support services, and experiences of violence and discrimination.
- **Examine Key Factors Affecting Them:** Analyze the wide range of factors affecting the safety and well-being of children and youth in Ottawa, including housing insecurity, poverty, access to essential services, and experiences of violence.
- **Identify Trends in Their Development:** Identify trends and patterns in the well-being of children and youth across different developmental stages, from early childhood through adolescence, to the transition into adulthood.
- **Promote Intersectional Approaches:** Adopt an intersectional lens to support policy development and service provision that addresses systemic barriers to children and youth safety and wellness.
- **Support Long-Term Positive Change:** Provide the evidence base to inform policy development, service provision, and community initiatives.

## Methodology & Framework for Analysis

This brief was developed based on a wide array of data sources to enable a comprehensive analysis framed by Sex- and Gender-Based Analysis Plus (SGBA+) and intersectionality. SGBA+ assesses how intersecting identity factors such as sex, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, and disability affect policy and program effectiveness. Primary data was obtained from Statistics Canada, providing essential demographic information, child poverty rates, and general well-being indicators for the children and youth population within the city.

Additional data sources include Ottawa Public Health, School Boards, Ottawa Police Service, Community Organizations, Ottawa Insights, the Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal, and the City of Ottawa, all offering local data covering a spectrum of social issues affecting children and youth in Ottawa.

The Neighbourhood Equity Index and Ottawa Neighbourhood Study contributed data on socio-economic disparities, enabling both an intersectional and neighbourhood-level analysis. External research reports and literature reviews further enriched these sources with broader analyses of children and youth's well-being and safety, providing deeper insight into the underlying causes of observed data patterns.

Together, these resources form the foundational base for the analysis conducted, guiding the conclusions and observations presented. ***A detailed reference page is included at the end of the document for further information on all sources utilized.***

### Research Questions

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the well-being and safety of children and youth in Ottawa, the following key questions have guided this research:

- What are the current population trends of children and youth in Ottawa?
- What are the key safety challenges and risk factors they face?
- How do socio-economic indicators impact the safety and well-being of these groups?
- What trends and patterns emerge in the well-being of different developmental stages?

### Framework for Analysis – SGBA+ and Intersectionality

Sex- and Gender-Based Analysis Plus (SGBA+) and Intersectionality provide a comprehensive framework for systematically exploring and understanding the diverse experiences of children and youth in Ottawa in this brief.

SGBA+ goes beyond merely considering biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences, including a wide array of factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability. This approach allows for a nuanced analysis of policies and programs. Intersectionality, a key

component of SGBA+, emphasizes the interconnected nature of social categorizations, highlighting how overlapping identities affect individuals, especially those who are oppressed<sup>1</sup>.

By applying SGBA+ and intersectionality, this study aims to:

- **Identify and Understand Disparities:** Recognize how different groups of children and youth experience policies, programs, and initiatives. This includes understanding the varied impacts based on gender and intersecting identity factors.
- **Tailor Analysis to Specific Needs:** Delve into specific needs and challenges faced by diverse groups within the youth population. This detailed approach ensures that findings and recommendations are relevant and effective across different demographics.
- **Inform Policy and Program Development:** By identifying the nuanced needs and experiences of children and youth, this paper will guide the development of more equitable, inclusive, and effective policies and programs that address the root causes of disparities.
- **Promote Equity:** Contribute to the equity of outcomes for all children and youth. By acknowledging and dismantling systemic oppression, this research aims to foster a safer and more supportive environment for every young person in Ottawa.

### Data Limitations

While the application of SGBA+ and Intersectionality provides a robust framework for recognizing and addressing the diverse experiences of children and youth in Ottawa, it is important to acknowledge the limitations associated with relying solely on publicly reported data.

The breadth and depth of this analysis are inherently tied to the availability and comprehensiveness of existing datasets, which may not fully capture the nuanced realities faced by all groups. Specifically, certain populations may be underrepresented, or their experiences inadequately documented due to factors such as reporting biases, accessibility of data collection mechanisms, and the varying capacities of institutions to collect detailed demographic information.

Additionally, relying on publicly available data restricts our ability to uncover less visible dimensions of inequality and systemic oppression affecting children and youth. For instance, the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ youth, children with disabilities, and those from smaller racial or ethnic communities may not be fully captured. Indigenous children and youth often face systemic barriers and cultural marginalization that are inadequately represented in available data. Additionally, data on children in foster care or experiencing homelessness is often limited. These examples highlight how

---

<sup>1</sup> Cameron & Tedds, 2020

data limitations can impede our understanding of these groups' challenges and hinder the development of effective policy responses.

### Term Definitions

- **Equity Deserving Groups:** These are communities and individuals who experience barriers to equal access, opportunities, and resources due to aspects of their identity, such as race, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, etc. They are "deserving" of focused equity efforts to rectify these imbalances.
- **Equity-Denied Groups:** Similar to equity-deserving groups, this term emphasizes the active denial of equity to certain groups due to systemic and institutional biases and practices. These groups are denied equitable treatment, often necessitating targeted actions to ensure their fair treatment and access to opportunities.
- **2SLGBTQ+:** This stands for Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and additional sexual orientations, and gender identities.
- **Individuals from Lower-Socioeconomic Backgrounds:** This refers to people living in poverty or low-income situations, who often face significant barriers to accessing education, healthcare, stable housing, and other essential resources. Economic status can intersect with other identity factors to compound the effects of inequality and exclusion.
- **Lateral Violence:** This refers to the harmful behaviour exhibited by individuals towards their peers within the same level or communities, characterized by actions such as bullying, gossiping, jealousy, and non-verbal aggression.
- **Systemic Violence:** This refers to harm and oppression that occurs as a result of established societal and institutional practices and policies. It is embedded within the frameworks of social, economic, and political systems, affecting groups based on race, gender, class, and other identities.

## Demographic Profile of Children and Youth in the City of Ottawa

### This Section:

- Provides a snapshot of the children and youth's population distribution, cultural and identity diversity, and educational attainment, aiming to illustrate a full picture of their living conditions.
- Addresses systemic issues and challenges that impact the development and well-being of Ottawa's children and youth, highlighting areas where support and intervention are critically needed.
- Serves as a foundational component for understanding the diverse needs and experiences of children and youth across the city.

### Children and Youth Population Trends

Leveraging census data is crucial to gaining a solid grasp of the demographics of children and youth in the City of Ottawa. This information informs population trends and age-specific distributions, enabling effective planning for future needs arising from any anticipated changes. Such insights are instrumental in ensuring that policies are not only relevant but also targeted towards enhancing the quality of life, well-being, and sense of community among Ottawa's younger residents.

Table 1 categorizes the children and youth population by age in 2021 and highlights the 2035 projections across different age segments. Ottawa is home to 298,090 children and youth under the age of 25, representing 29.30% of the city's total population. This is slightly higher than the provincial average, where children and youth consist of 27.76% of Ontario's overall population.

Despite the projected growth in the children and youth population from 298,090 in 2021 to 347,045 in 2035, their share of the total population is expected to decrease from 29.30% to 27.73%. This indicates a relative decline in the proportion of children and youth, suggesting that while the number of young people is increasing, the overall population is growing at a faster rate, driven mostly by an aging demographic and decreasing fertility rates. Several factors could contribute to the decrease in fertility rates, including higher educational attainment and workforce participation among women, leading to delayed childbearing and smaller family sizes. Economic pressures, such as the high cost of living housing, also discourage larger families.

Age Group	Total Population	% of Population	2035 Projections	% of Population
0-4	48,790	4.80%	64,496	5.15%
5-14	118,130	11.61%	135,761	10.85%
15-19	60,385	5.93%	69,095	5.42%
20-24	70,785	6.96%	77,693	5.52%
Total	298,090	29.30%	347,045	27.73%

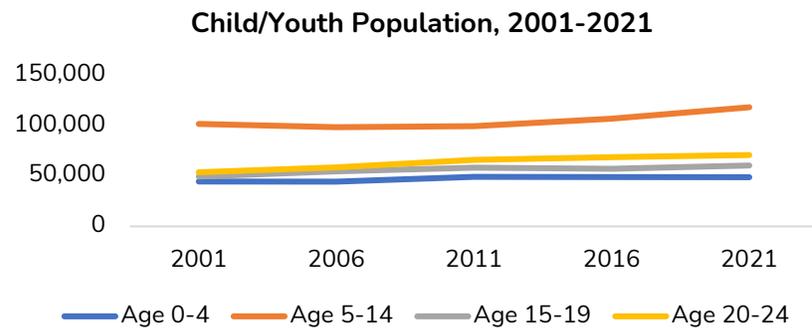
**Table 1:** City of Ottawa: Child/Youth Population by Age. *Statistics Canada, 2021 & Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2023*



Further examination of population trends by age through the 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021 Census periods (Figure 1), shows a notable growth in the population of children aged 5-14.

As this age group transitions from adolescence into adulthood, it is imperative to develop services and infrastructure that not only meet their current needs but also address emerging demands related to employment, housing, and mental health support, among other components.

Additionally, the Ontario Ministry of Finance forecasts that Ottawa will experience one of the fastest rates of overall population growth (54.5%) in the province from 1.07 million in 2022 to 1.66 million in 2046, with over 50% projected growth in the number of children aged 0-14 over the period 2022-2046.



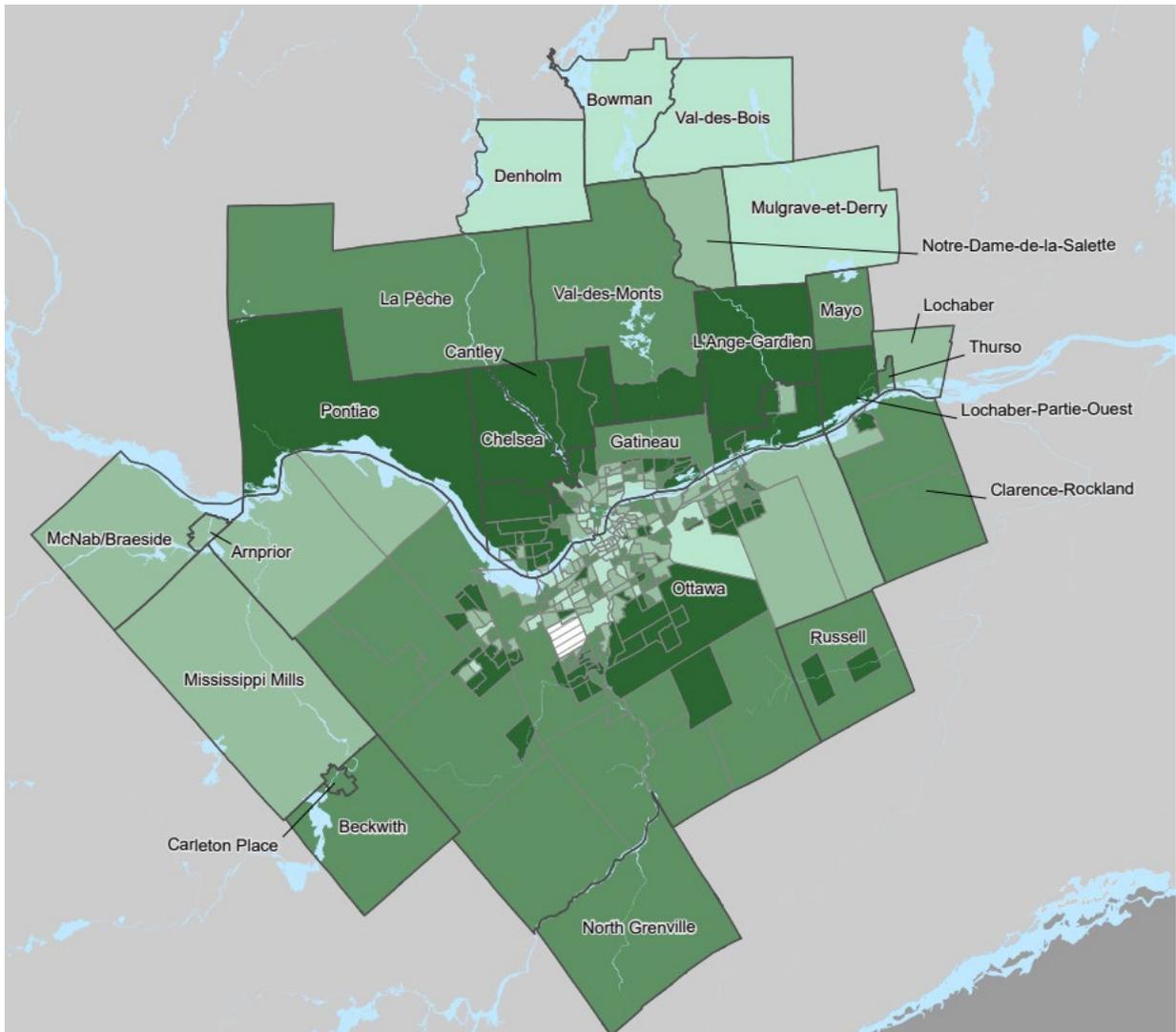
**Figure 1:** Child/Youth Population by Age, 2001-2021. *Statistics Canada, 2021*

Considering the projected population growth within the city, particularly among children aged 0-14, ensuring the well-being and safety of children and youth becomes crucial to fostering an environment where they can thrive.

### Where Children and Youth Reside

Identifying the geographical distribution of children and youth populations within the city is a critical step in informing policymaking and strategy development. This analysis facilitates a nuanced understanding of their specific needs, enabling the development of targeted interventions and the allocation of resources to promote their holistic development and well-being in the long run.

**Figure 2:** Percentage of the population aged 0 to 14 in 2021 by census tract (CT) in Ottawa-Gatineau. *Statistics Canada, 2021*



The map above (Figure 2) provides a breakdown of the percentage of the population aged 0 to 14 in 2021 by census tract within the Ottawa-Gatineau Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). Census tracts (CTs) are small, relatively stable geographic areas that usually have a population between 2,500 and 8,000 persons. There are:

- 85 census tracts where the population of children and youth aged 0 to 14 is 19% or more of the total population (Dark green).
- 79 census tracts where the population of children and youth aged 0 to 14 is between 16% and 19% (Medium dark green).

- 89 census tracts where the population of children and youth aged 0 to 14 is between 13% and 16% (Medium light green).
- 61 census tracts where the population of children and youth aged 0 to 14 is 13% and less (Light green).

Top Neighbourhoods with the highest percentage				
<b>0-14-years</b>	Half Moon Bay - 24.91%	Findlay Creek - 24.12%	Stittsville East – 23.99%	Riverside South Leitrim – 22.41%
<b>14-24 years</b>	City view – 21%	Rideau Crest- Davidson Heights – 18.8%	South Keys – 17.8%	Iris – 16.6%

**Table 2:** Top Neighbourhoods with the highest % children and youth. *Statistics Canada, 2021*

As highlighted in both Figure 2 and Table 2, school-age children and youth tend to live in neighbourhoods farther away from the downtown core area with less access to public transportation, services, and networks that could support their sense of community and belonging. As they transition to university, they tend to move closer to central neighbourhoods (e.g., Sandy Hill, Centretown).

The distribution of children and youth highlights the importance of a nuanced approach to planning and resource allocation that considers the proportional population and growth patterns of different areas. Areas with growing populations of children and youth will need to ensure that services are scalable and can meet increasing demands. In contrast, areas with stable or declining populations should focus on maintaining high-quality and diverse services to address current needs effectively.

### Educational Attainment

Table 3 highlights the comparison of educational attainment in Ottawa and Ontario. The percentage of the population aged 15 years and over without a high-school diploma or equivalency certificate is lower in Ottawa (12%) compared to Ontario (16.7%). Similarly, a smaller proportion of the Ottawa population (11%) does not have higher qualifications (certificate, diploma, or degree) compared to the Ontario average (15.3%).

	City of Ottawa	Ontario
% With No High-School Diploma or Equivalency Certificate for the population aged 15 years and over	12%	16.7%
% No certificate, diploma, or degree for the population aged 15 years and over	11%	15.3%

**Table 3:** City of Ottawa and Ontario Education Attainment. *Statistics Canada, 2021*

However, educational attainment levels vary significantly across neighbourhoods, with Greenbelt West (31.6%) and Ledbury Heron Gate – Ridgemont (20.2%) having the highest percentages of residents without a high school diploma. In contrast, Rockcliffe Park (100%) and New Edinburgh (98.4%) have nearly complete high school completion rates.

A noticeable correlation exists between neighbourhood education levels and the economic well-being of its residents. Specifically, income levels are inversely related to the percentage of individuals without a high school diploma or higher education. For instance, Rockcliffe Park has a 100% rate of individuals with a high school diploma and an average income is \$121,800, while Greenbelt East has a rate of 24.2% of individuals without a high school diploma and an average income is \$38,400.

Ottawa possesses high overall educational attainment compared to the provincial average (49.5% of people aged 25 to 64 in Ottawa had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 36.8% in Ontario), yet within its own borders, important disparities among neighbourhoods exist, reflecting a broader issue of educational inequity. Such disparities necessitate targeted policies and initiatives focused on equity-deserving and denied communities to foster equitable growth and enhance living standards across Ottawa.

### **Increasingly Diverse Communities**

Ottawa is characterized by a rich mix of ethnicities, religions, cultures, and languages, with 156 ethnic groups, more than 70 languages, and 32.47% of its residents being racialized<sup>2</sup>. Among the racialized population, individuals are from diverse backgrounds dominated by Black (26.08%), followed by Arab (17.90%) and South Asian (17.79%) backgrounds. This segment of the population is also known to be young and growing at the rate of four times the city's general population.

The demographic landscape of Ottawa is expected to become even more diverse in the coming years. By 2031, 36% of Ottawa will identify as racialized and 29% of its residents will be individuals born outside of Canada.

### **Newcomers/Immigrants:**

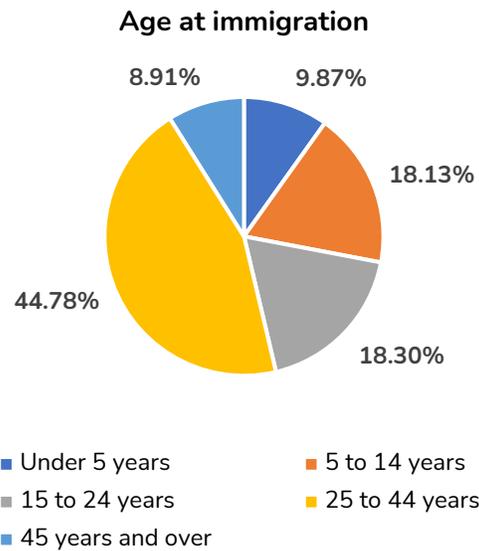
In Ottawa, immigrants and their children constitute a significant portion of the city's population, at 44%<sup>3</sup>. From 2016 to 2021, Ottawa welcomed 47,415 new immigrants, which is equivalent to 4.7% of its total population. The leading countries of origin are India, Syria, and China, and the top non-official languages spoken at home in Ottawa are Arabic, Mandarin, Spanish, Hindi, and Yue (Cantonese).

---

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada, 2021

<sup>3</sup> Ottawa Public Health, n.d.

According to Census 2021, the immigrant population in Ottawa includes 259,220 individuals who immigrated at a variety of ages (Figure 3). Specifically, 9.87% of immigrants were under 5 years old when they arrived, 18.13% were between 5 and 14 and 18.30% were between 15 to 24, highlighting a young immigrant demographic that contributes to the diversity and growth of Ottawa.



**Figure 3:** Age at Immigration. *Statistics Canada, 2021*

### Indigenous Peoples:

In 2021, Ottawa's Indigenous population reached 26,395, accounting for 2.6% of the city's total population, a 15% increase from the 2016 census data. However, this number could be significantly higher as urban Indigenous populations are often undercounted in Ontario due to increased rates of mobility (no fixed address), migration between geographical locations, and historical mistrust of government institutions and colonial policies.

While specific data on the age distribution of Indigenous youth in Ottawa is not available, Indigenous youth represent the largest and fastest-growing population in Ontario. Almost half of Ontario's Indigenous population (43%) is under the age of 24, compared to one-third (32%) of the non-Indigenous population<sup>4</sup>.

Projections indicate that the Indigenous population will continue to grow in all census metropolitan areas in Ontario, including Ottawa–Gatineau<sup>5</sup>. Estimates suggest an increase from 58,000 in 2016 to 85,000 by 2041, highlighting the ongoing demographic shifts and the growing importance of addressing the needs and aspirations of Indigenous children and youth in the city.

### Francophones:

The Ottawa francophone community is not only rich in history and culture but also vibrant and diverse, comprising 126,030 individuals who identify French as their first official language<sup>6</sup>. This diversity is reflected in the origins of its francophone communities, who come from various parts of the world

<sup>4</sup> MakeWay, n.d.

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada, 2021

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

including Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Europe, with 23,525 who identify as a member of a visible minority.

The children component of this community is significant, with 72,675 children, born in 2003 or later, eligible for instruction in French as a minority official language. This represents 35.22% of children in this age group, underscoring their vital role in the continuation and growth of French culture and language in the city.

Ottawa's appeal as a destination for French speakers is notable, attracting nearly 18,000 francophones from other parts of Canada between 2016 and 2021. In fact, Ottawa emerged as the top choice for French speakers relocating from Manitoba or Alberta during this period, alongside 5,000 individuals from other regions of Ontario. This influx from across the country reflects Ottawa's status as a hub for French culture and education in Canada, offering a welcoming and supportive environment for francophones.

### Risk of Poverty

Canada has seen a notable rise in the rate of child poverty, rising from 15.2% in 2020 to 17.8% in 2021. Today, over one million Canadian children live in poverty<sup>7</sup>. This translates to approximately one in five children living in persistent fear and stress, facing significant barriers in meeting their basic needs, such as stable housing and nutritious food, and accessing opportunities, including access to quality early childhood experiences. For instance, Ottawa saw 37% of the people served in food banks were children in 2023<sup>8</sup>.

In Ottawa, the situation reflects broader national trends, with 5.6% of children and youth living in poverty<sup>9</sup>, including 3,615 children under the age of 5 according to census 2021. Additionally, youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET) are at higher risk of long-term poverty due to conditions that impede their ability to acquire skills needed for gainful employment. The percentage of youth NEET in Ottawa was similar between racialized (11.4%) and non-racialized (10.7%) populations in 2020.

Children are particularly vulnerable to poverty as they are unable to earn income. Factors that lead to child poverty are closely linked to those affecting adults. High childcare costs, job losses, family breakups, and disabilities can all significantly increase the likelihood of poverty among families.

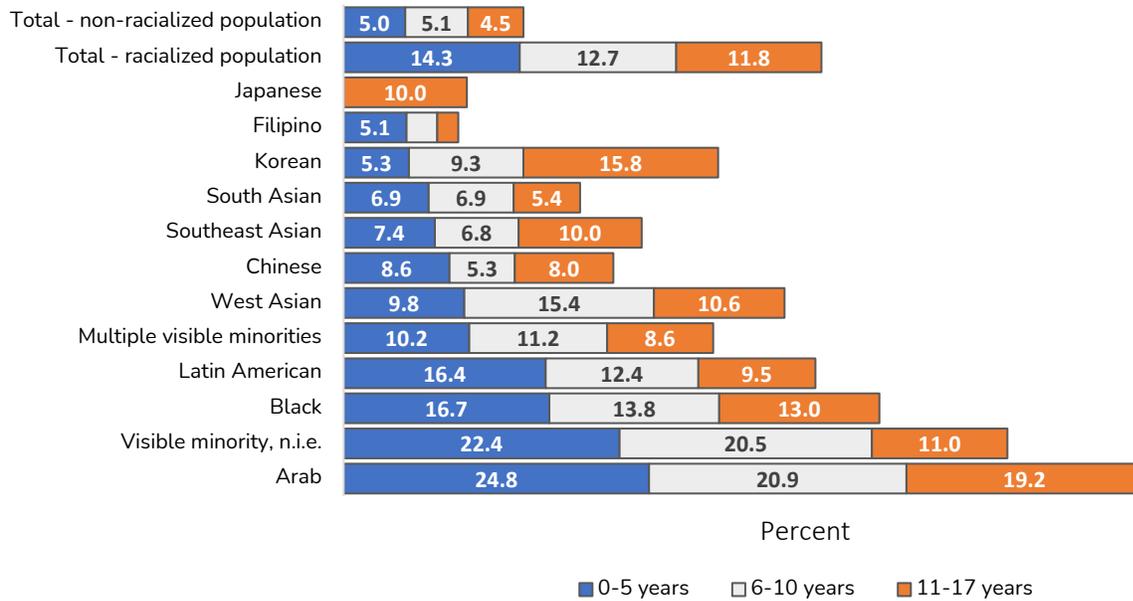
---

<sup>7</sup> Racine & Premji, 2024

<sup>8</sup> Ottawa Food Bank, 2023

<sup>9</sup> based on the Low-Income Cut-Offs after tax (LICO-AT). Low-income cut-offs after tax (LICO-AT) are income thresholds below which a family is likely to spend significantly more on necessities such as food, housing, and clothing than the average family.

**Percentage of children experiencing poverty by race and age (Market Basket Measure), Ottawa, 2020**



**Figure 4:** Children experiencing poverty by race and age (MBM). *Statistics Canada, 2021*

Poverty remains disproportionately high among equity-deserving and denied groups, as highlighted above in Figure 4, but also among first-generation Canadians, people with disabilities, and lone-parent households<sup>10</sup>.

In 2021, the percentage of children experiencing poverty in Ottawa was more than five times higher among children living with single parents (37.6%) compared to those living with two parents (6.9%). Among households with at least one child under 17 years old, the percentage of single-parent families who became low-income was more than three times higher (10.4%) than couple families (3.0%)<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, the number of children living in lone-parent families in Ottawa has increased

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada. 2021.

compared to 2019 and 2020, with 5,250 aged 5 years and under in 2021 (Figure 5). This shows the increased vulnerability of these children to poverty during crucial development stages.

When analyzing Ottawa Neighbourhood Study data, some neighbourhoods (e.g., Emerald Woods - Sawmill Creek) see almost half of the children living in low-income households, highlighting significant local disparities.

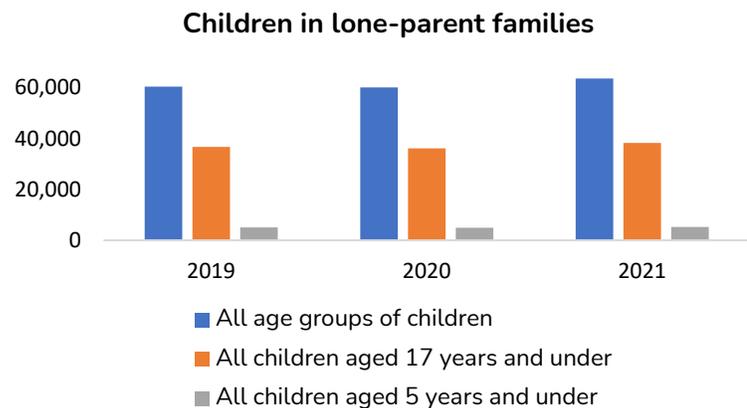


Figure 5: Children in lone-parent families in Ottawa. Statistics Canada, 2021

The poverty rate for people with disabilities is twice as high as for people who do not have disabilities. In 2021, 16.5% of Canadians with disabilities lived in poverty, compared to 8.6% of those without disabilities—a disparity that is likely also reflected in Ottawa<sup>12</sup>.

### Risk of Housing Insecurity and Homelessness

Ottawa was the first city in Canada to declare a housing emergency in 2020. Of the 1,340 individuals experiencing homelessness in Ottawa in 2021, 13% identified as youth. This issue is further exacerbated in equity-deserving and denied groups, as one in three homeless young individuals in Canada identifies to be part of 2SLGBTQ+ and 45% of Indigenous youth who have faced homelessness first experienced it before the age of 16<sup>13</sup>.

As young people in Ottawa transition to greater independence, housing insecurity becomes a challenge, especially for those setting out on their own. According to a recent Statistics Canada report titled: “Young adults living with their parents in Canada in 2021”, young adults, especially those aged 18 to 24 who begin renting are almost twice as likely to live in unaffordable housing than existing renters. In fact, nearly one in four renter households in Ottawa are in core housing need<sup>14</sup>, compared to 4.6% of owner households<sup>15</sup>. Consequently, the housing crisis disproportionately affects young adults as they strive to establish their independence in the city.

<sup>12</sup> Disability Without Poverty, 2023

<sup>13</sup> United Way East Ontario, n.d.

<sup>14</sup> measures whether a household experiences problems relating to affordability ('affordable' is defined as paying less than 30% of income on shelter costs), suitability (enough space for the composition of the household) or adequacy (housing in good repair).

<sup>15</sup> A housing profile of Ottawa, 2024



## The State of Child and Youth Safety and Well-being in the City of Ottawa

### This Section:

- Provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of safety and well-being among children and youth in Ottawa.
- Explores factors impacting young lives, ranging from physical, emotional, and online safety to broader considerations of health, education, and social inclusion at different developmental phases. The assessment extends to examining the influence of socio-economic factors on the youth, highlighting the crucial roles played by healthcare, educational opportunities, and accessible community services.
- Sheds light on the existing challenges and successes in fostering a safe and supportive environment for Ottawa's younger residents, ensuring their holistic development and well-being.

As articulated in the previous section, recent data has shown that children and youth in the City of Ottawa encounter significant pressures from poverty, discrimination, immigration status, and housing unaffordability. This section explores the current state of Ottawa's children and youth safety and well-being.

### Concerning Trends in Children and Youth Well-being

Socio-economic vulnerabilities and environmental surroundings (e.g., home, school, community, etc.) play a significant role in children's healthy development. Well-being measurements tailored to the early years, middle years, and adolescents offer valuable insight into how children and youth are doing in Ontario, especially in Ottawa. Key trends and factors impacting their development are highlighted below for each of these stages.

#### Early Years

A child's first six years are determinant for lifelong learning and health. The World Health Organization (WHO) highlights that early childhood development (ECD) crucially influences physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth<sup>16</sup>. Parenting practices, along with the surrounding environments, play pivotal roles in shaping a child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. Children's experiences can either nurture health and resiliency or make them vulnerable to poor health and development<sup>17</sup>. Acknowledging the critical role of ECD, understanding factors such

---

<sup>16</sup> Early Childhood Development, 2024

<sup>17</sup> Canadian Paediatric Society, n.d.

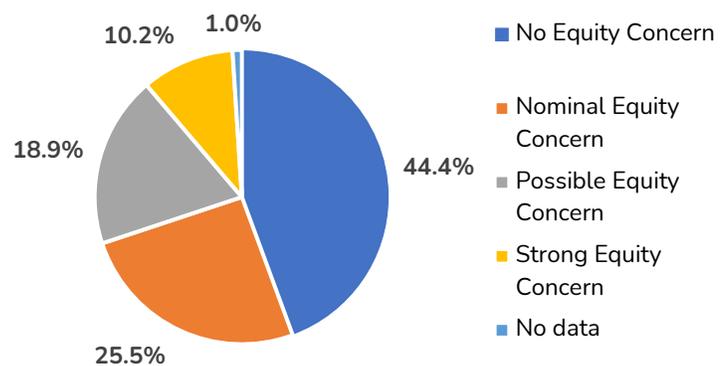
as household income, food security and access, and the physical and mental health of parents and caregivers is essential to supporting positive outcomes.

### Current Factors Impacting Early Childhood Development

**Mental Health Support:** According to Ottawa Public Health, 23.1% of postpartum mothers self-reported a mental health concern during pregnancy to their healthcare provider in 2022, showing a slight uptick compared to 2021 (22.7%). Among postpartum mothers who had previously given birth, 4.3% reported a history of postpartum depression. The mental well-being of mothers is crucial for the emotional, cognitive, and physical development of their children, as issues like anxiety and depression can adversely affect attachment, learning abilities, and overall health.

**Childcare Accessibility:** Figure 6 shows that 10.2% of Ottawa neighbourhoods exhibit significant equity concerns related to childcare accessibility (aged 0-5), with Metcalfe-Edwards-Vernon, Osgoode, and Richmond Village identified as the three neighbourhoods with the strongest equity concerns. This disparity in childcare access can significantly impact child development by limiting opportunities for early socialization, educational enrichment, and consistent, quality care.

**Percentage of Neighbours per Domain Score for the Proximity to Childcare Indicator**



**Figure 6:** Percentage of Neighbourhoods per Domain Score for the Proximity to Childcare Indicator. *Neighbourhood Equity Index*

**Food Insecurity:** Food insecurity is a growing concern—the number of people in Ottawa experiencing food insecurity has more than doubled since 2017, from 1 in 15 to 1 in 7 according to the Ottawa Food Bank's latest report. Particularly, March 2023 marked the highest demand they have experienced in nearly four decades<sup>18</sup>. The Ottawa Public Health's Nutritious Food Basket report revealed that a family of four on Ontario Works has a monthly deficit of \$306. Although various initiatives and programs, such as the National School Food Program—which aims to provide meals to an additional 400,000 children each year beyond those served by existing school food programs—are being implemented, the scarcity of resources continues to have far-reaching impacts. This scarcity not only affects the physical health of children, through malnutrition and related health conditions but also impairs

<sup>18</sup> Ottawa Food Bank, 2023

cognitive development and academic achievement, as well as emotional and social well-being, by fostering environments of stress and uncertainty that are detrimental to learning and growth.

**Systemic Racism:** Systemic issues, including racism and ableism, significantly contribute to the perpetuation of poverty and exacerbate health disparities. In 2021, food insecurity rates were notably higher among Indigenous populations (31%), Arab/West Asians (28%), and Black communities (22%). Additionally, 24% of food bank users were new Canadians, illustrating the intersection of systemic discrimination and food insecurity. This environment of inequality not only restricts access to essential resources for healthy physical growth but also imposes barriers to educational opportunities and creates psychological stress.

### Current State of Children According to the Early Development Instrument

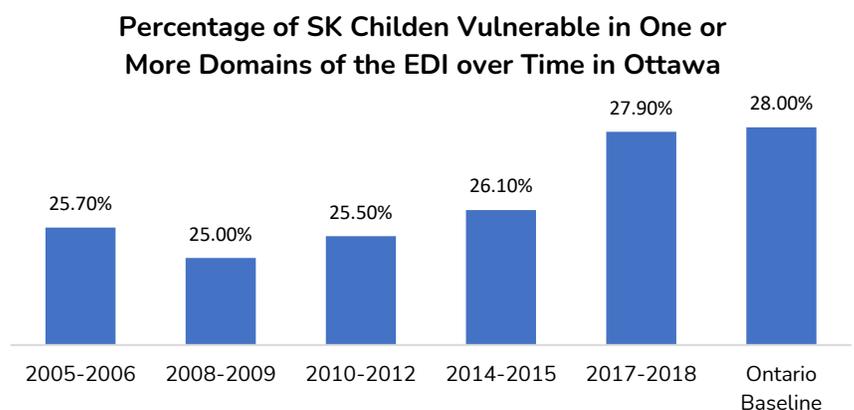
The Early Development Instrument (EDI) is a questionnaire that measures five general areas of child development: Physical Health & Well-Being; Social Competence; Emotional Maturity; Language & Cognitive Development; and Communication Skills & General Knowledge. The tool was developed by Dr Dan Offord and Dr Magdalena Janus at the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University.

Five EDI cycles were completed in Ottawa between 2005 and 2018 through collaborative efforts of Ottawa's local school boards, the Offord Centre for Child Studies, the Ministry of Education, the City of Ottawa's Children's Services, the Ottawa Data Analysis Coordinators and the Parent Resource Centre. The participating school boards were Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Ottawa Catholic School Board, Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario.

According to the data collected through the EDI Instrument between 2017 and 2018, 1 in 4 senior kindergarten (SK) children were not developmentally healthy at school entry, marking a slight increase over time.

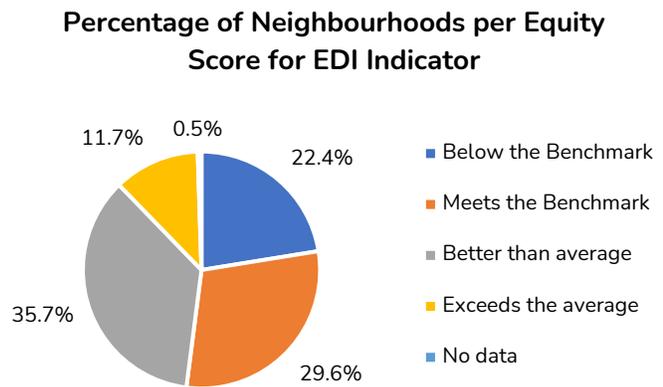
The percentage of SK children vulnerable in one or more domains of the EDI over the cycles conducted has increased over time (Figure 7); particularly in the following neighbourhoods:

Clementine/Riverside Park, Hunt Club West, and Carleton Heights.



**Figure 7:** Percentage of SK Children Vulnerable in One or More Domains of the EDI over Time in Ottawa. *Parent Resource Centre, 2018*

The percentage of SK children vulnerable in at least one EDI domain varies significantly across different neighbourhoods, with rates ranging from 7% to 48% as highlighted in Figure 8. A total of 44 neighbourhoods scored below the benchmark, including Overbrook, Carleton Heights, and Vanier-McArthur Avenue. This underscores the role of place-based interventions that are tailored to local needs in addressing such important disparities.



**Figure 8:** Percentage of Neighbourhoods per Equity Score for the EDI Indicator. *Neighbourhood Equity Index*

The vulnerabilities are particularly pronounced in the following domains:

- **Physical Health and Well-Being:** An increase in vulnerability suggests more SK children are facing challenges with their physical readiness and health, affecting their ability to participate fully in school activities.
- **Social Competence:** The rise in vulnerability indicates that more SK children are struggling with social interactions and relationships, which are crucial for collaborative learning and emotional development.
- **Emotional Maturity:** The increase in vulnerability highlights that a greater number of SK children are experiencing difficulties managing their emotions and behaviours in a school setting, impacting their learning and social integration.

On the other hand, Language & Cognitive Development and Communication Skills & General Knowledge percentages have increased, which suggests that despite challenges in other areas, more SK children are demonstrating improvements in their abilities to understand and use language, think critically, communicate effectively, and apply general knowledge in learning environments.

Finally, it is important to note that 4 in 5 SK children with special needs are not developmentally healthy at school entry, highlighting a significant opportunity for targeted interventions and support aimed at enhancing their developmental outcomes and educational readiness.

### **Middle Years and Adolescence**

Middle childhood and adolescence, especially between the ages of nine to 18, is a crucial phase in human development. During this time, children experience important cognitive, social, and emotional

changes that establish their identity and lay the groundwork for their growth in adulthood. Although this period carries increased risks, it also presents significant development opportunities<sup>19</sup>.

The Ottawa Child and Youth Initiative (OCYI) partnered with UNICEF Canada, the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation to develop and pilot the Child and Youth Well-Being Survey for children and youth between the ages of nine and 18 in 2021. Table 3 (below) highlights key observations resulting from the survey and the corresponding implications of each to the well-being of children and youth in the city:

**Table 3:** Child and Youth Well-Being Survey Results, *Ottawa Child & Youth Initiative, 2021*

Observations	Implications
<p><b>63.4% of Children &amp; Youth Well-Being Survey respondents reported feeling a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging. However, 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.</b></p>	<p>While the majority reported a strong sense of belonging, individuals who feel that they are disconnected and are not part of a larger community are especially vulnerable to poor outcomes, including feelings of loneliness and impulsive or self-harmful behaviour.</p> <p>Supportive relationships with teachers, peers, and parents play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing students' overall well-being<sup>20</sup>.</p> <p>Additionally, the disparity observed suggests that chronic illness or disability can significantly impact a child's sense of belonging, potentially leading to feelings of isolation.</p>
<p><b>Feelings of loneliness were very common among participants, with over half (56.6%) of respondents reporting feeling lonely on at least a regular basis.</b></p>	<p>High levels of loneliness among children and youth indicate a need for more supportive social environments and interventions that promote connection and community engagement.</p>
<p><b>Only three in 10 (28.3%) of respondents reported their mental health as very good or excellent.</b></p>	<p>The low percentage of children and youth reporting very good or excellent mental health highlights the critical need for accessible and equitable mental health resources and support systems.</p>
<p><b>When asked about feelings of sadness or hopelessness, 52.3% of respondents said they felt sad or hopeless several days in a row.</b></p>	<p>The prevalence of sadness and hopelessness points to the importance of early intervention programs focused on emotional well-being, as well as fostering resilience and coping mechanisms.</p>
<p><b>Almost one in five (19.8%) of respondents reported that they have been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder.</b></p>	<p>The significant number of children and youth diagnosed with anxiety disorders highlights the need for mental health education, screening, and treatment services, emphasizing the importance of early detection.</p>
<p><b>67.9% feel school pressure stemming from assigned schoolwork. When asked about daily</b></p>	<p>The significant stress associated with schoolwork highlights the need for educational institutions to evaluate and potentially</p>

<sup>19</sup> Del Giudice, 2017

<sup>20</sup> Allen, 2022

Observations	Implications
stress, 36.8% of respondents indicated life was extremely or quite a bit stressful.	reduce homework burdens, while also introducing innovative, less stressful learning strategies to enhance student engagement and well-being.

This survey was conducted during the COVID-19 lockdown, a unique situation that likely influenced the findings. Ottawa Public Health data has shown that the pandemic has had significant impacts on mental health, with the potential for both temporary and lasting effects on children and youth. For example, in 2021, for every 100,000 residents in Ottawa aged 0-14, there were about 952 visits to the emergency department for mental health or substance use issues.

In summary, a strong sense of belonging is crucial for youth, as its absence is proven to be correlated with increased loneliness and has detrimental effects on their mental health and academic success. Supportive relationships with teachers, peers, and parents are essential for fostering this sense of belonging. Disparities exist, particularly for those with chronic illness or disability, highlighting the need for inclusive environments. Addressing loneliness requires interventions promoting connection and community engagement. Accessible mental health resources are critical, given the low reported mental health levels and high prevalence of anxiety disorders. Early intervention programs focusing on emotional well-being and resilience are essential. Educational institutions should consider reducing homework burdens and implementing less stressful learning strategies to alleviate student stress.

Additionally, the Rural Ottawa Youth Mental Health Collective launched an online survey in February 2021 for those between the ages of 12 and 24 living in the rural areas of five Ottawa Wards: Osgoode, Rideau-Goulbourn, Orleans-East Cumberland, Orleans-South Navan, and West Carleton. 39% of youth in rural Ottawa described their overall mental health as healthy, while only 11.3% of 2SLGBTQ+ youth described themselves as mentally healthy.

### **The Effects of COVID-19**

Children and youth in Ontario and Ottawa showed resilience during the pandemic, much like their counterparts elsewhere. However, they also faced significant challenges, including social isolation due to lockdowns and school closures, which have led to increased levels of loneliness and anxiety. The long-term effects may include heightened mental health vulnerabilities necessitating tailored and ongoing support and interventions.

Additionally, the pandemic has disproportionately negatively impacted children and adolescents living in low-socioeconomic households, those who faced prolonged school closures, and those lacking essential support structures such as family and teachers, according to recent data published by WHO/Europe and the Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC) study. The data also

highlighted that, on average and across various indicators, older schoolgirls have experienced the pandemic's effects more than younger boys, with a marked impact on their mental health<sup>21</sup>.

This is further confirmed by the results from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey conducted by Public Health in 2021<sup>22</sup>. For instance, poor mental health and well-being, thoughts about attempting suicide, and self-harm behaviours were more prevalent amongst students in grades 9-12 of socioeconomic disadvantage and identifying as 2SLGBTQ+. Moreover, a third of students reported that the pandemic negatively impacted their mental health, especially girls and those in grades 9-12. Girls were significantly more likely to report difficulty with online learning from home during the pandemic than their male classmates.

School closures during the COVID-19 pandemic have worsened educational inequalities, particularly affecting students from low-income households. The lack of access to reliable internet and other remote learning tools has made it harder for these students to keep up. In the 2022-2023 academic year, Ottawa school boards reported higher percentages of Grade 3 students not meeting provincial standards in reading and writing compared to Grade 6 students. Moreover, the percentage of students not meeting the provincial standard in mathematics was as high as 39.1% (Grade 3), 48.5% (Grade 6), and 39.1% (Grade 9). These learning losses could have long-term effects on students' future job prospects and financial stability.

Additionally, the pandemic-related family hardships experienced by families in Ottawa, such as economic strain and health concerns, have likely increased stress levels among caregivers and youth alike. A study published by the American Academy of Pediatrics extended the family stress model to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 pandemic-related family hardships on caregiver and youth stress and, in turn, youth's psychological well-being. It found that more pandemic-related family hardships were associated with increased caregiver and youth stress, which negatively affected youth life satisfaction. The study also highlighted the importance of social connectedness and family engagement in promoting life satisfaction among youth<sup>23</sup>.

Finally, according to a recent CBC analysis<sup>24</sup>, there has been an increase in chronic absence rates among Canadian students, compared to pre-pandemic times. Some districts report more than two-thirds of students being chronically absent, defined as missing at least 10% of the school year. Studies have shown that students with high rates of absenteeism correlate with diminished perceptions of their academic ability. Absenteeism not only adversely affects personal outcomes, including employment and health, but also impacts social outcomes like increasing the likelihood of

---

<sup>21</sup> World Health Organization, 2023

<sup>22</sup> Ottawa Public Health, 2021

<sup>23</sup> Bradley et al., 2022

<sup>24</sup> Carman & Wesley, 2020

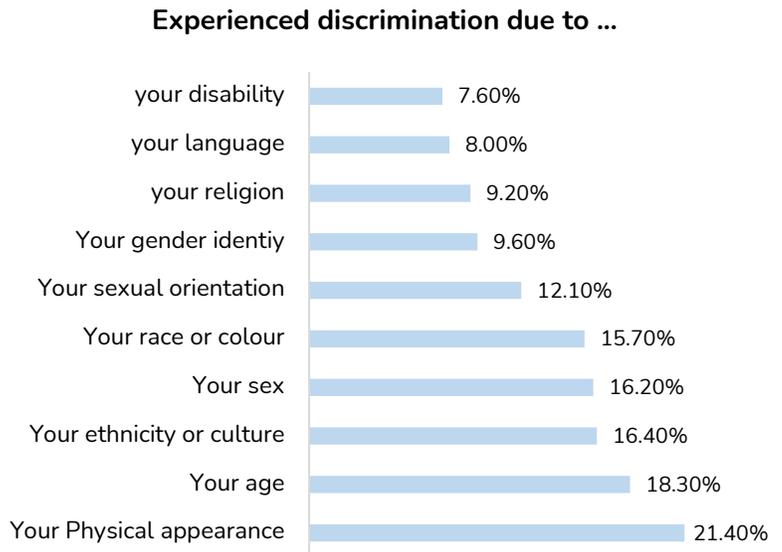
engaging with the criminal justice and social service systems<sup>25</sup>. The increasing trend in school chronic absences signals a possible mental health crisis among children and youth and challenges in adapting to post-pandemic realities. This is also reflected by the Ottawa Public Health dashboard, which shows a 12.6% rise in Grade 7-8 students reporting their mental health as 'fair' or 'poor'.

**Factors That Affect Safety, Security and Belonging in The City**

It is important to understand how children and youth are impacted by violence in its many forms: racism, lateral and systemic violence, bullying and cyberbullying, gender-based violence, and criminal activity. The pervasive exposure to violence degrades the sense of safety, security, and belonging that is crucial for youth to thrive. It is important to note that the stigma associated with violence affecting youth leads to a significant underreporting of incidents, making the available data represent just the tip of the iceberg.

**Racism & Lateral and Systemic Violence**

As shown by the Child and Youth Well-Being Survey results (Figure 9), children and youth can experience discrimination due to several factors, including physical appearance, ethnicity, gender, religion, or disability. 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%).



**Figure 9:** Reasons why children and children experienced discrimination. *Child and Youth Well-being Survey Data Brief Report, 2021*

Racism and lateral and systemic violence exert a profound and detrimental impact on the health outcomes of children and youth. Prior studies have demonstrated that such violence can impact an individual's self-esteem and sense of worth from a very young age. Children who encounter systemic discrimination often feel anger and despair, leading to an increased likelihood of depression, anxiety, suicidal tendencies, and the use of substances as coping

<sup>25</sup> Pathways to Education, 2023



mechanisms. Continuous exposure to systemic racism acts as a sustained form of stress, contributing to negative health effects, especially regarding mental health, over one's lifetime<sup>26</sup>.

Research highlights the disproportionate impact of various forms of violence and systemic issues on equity-denied communities in Canada, which is likely also the case in Ottawa, especially for Black, Indigenous and Newcomer populations, including:

- **Lateral Violence Among Indigenous Students:** Indigenous post-secondary students face serious concerns regarding lateral violence within universities in Ontario, indicating systemic issues that exacerbate problems rooted in colonization and oppression<sup>27</sup>.
- **Racial profiling and over-policing catalysts for the school-to-prison pipeline:** 73% of black youth in Ontario and 57% of Indigenous youth in Ontario experienced racial profiling. Students who are over-policed at school or experience racial profiling in other areas of their lives – such as when they are tailed by security guards while shopping or experience discriminatory attitudes from the general public, law enforcement, or their non-racialized peers – are more likely to develop “tougher” demeanours, which can lead to increased conflict as they age<sup>28</sup>.
- **Over-presentation of Black and Indigenous Communities in the Criminal Justice System:** Despite comprising about 4% of Canada's adult population, Black individuals accounted for 9% of the federal offender population in 2020/2021<sup>29</sup>. Additionally, Indigenous youth (12 to 17 years old) accounted for 8% of all youth in the provinces and territories but represented 46% of young people admitted to the corrections system in 2016-2017<sup>30</sup>. These groups face higher rates of policing and incarceration due to racial biases, historical injustices, and ongoing inequalities that are entrenched within the structures of society and the justice system today.

### **Bullying and Cyberbullying**

According to the Child and Youth Well-Being Survey results, 91.8% of children and youth between the ages of nine and eighteen in Ottawa felt reasonably safe or very safe. However, 35.4% of respondents experienced being left out/excluded on purpose at least once in the past couple of months.

While a majority of children and youth feel safe, a significant portion still experiences exclusion and potential bullying behaviours. This juxtaposition of a general sense of safety with the prevalence of exclusion underscores the nuanced impact of both bullying and cyberbullying. The findings from

---

<sup>26</sup> Gajaria, Guzder, & Rasasingham, 2022

<sup>27</sup> Bailey, 2020

<sup>28</sup> Laidlaw Foundation, 2023

<sup>29</sup> Department of Justice Canada, n.d.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

recent research have shown that cyberbullying exacerbates risks for mental health issues, including depressive symptoms, anxiety, and an increased likelihood of suicidal thoughts and behaviours<sup>31</sup>.

These survey results reflect a broader trend where, despite a perceived sense of safety, underlying issues of exclusion and bullying persist.

### **Sexual Violence and Sexual Exploitation**

Research has highlighted the vulnerability of children and youth to sexual violence and exploitation, a situation exacerbated by patriarchal social norms and systemic power imbalances. These factors, coupled with the increasing prevalence of online platforms, create the conditions for exploitation, disproportionately affecting those from equity-denied groups. Such violence is experienced differently across genders and abilities, emphasising the need for a nuanced understanding of its impact<sup>32</sup>.

Children and youth are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. In Canada, there were 15,630 incidents of police-reported online sexual offences against children and 45,816 incidents of online child pornography between 2014-2022<sup>33</sup>. Notably, Ontario reported 22% of child luring incidents in Canada. This is likely reflected in Ottawa, with the capital facing similar issues to a varying extent.

Additionally, Human trafficking, including both sexual exploitation and forced labour, presents a serious threat in Canada, particularly in Ontario. The country serves as a source, destination, and transit point for human trafficking activities<sup>34</sup>. According to Statistics Canada, there were 3,996 reported incidents of human trafficking between 2012 and 2022. In 2022 alone, 94% of the victims were women and girls. Over 70% of human trafficking victims identified by police are under the age of 25<sup>35</sup>. Indigenous women and girls, children in the child welfare system, at-risk youth, and individuals who are socially or economically disadvantaged are at the highest risk of falling victim to human trafficking.

### **Indigenous and Black Children and Youth in Care**

The child welfare system is crucial for nurturing the growth and development of vulnerable children and youth. In Ottawa, the number of children and youth under the age of 18 admitted into care has decreased significantly. Over the past five years, this number has decreased by 29.7%, and a 9.8% decrease occurred in the last fiscal year alone, bringing the total to 274 admissions in 2022-23.

---

<sup>31</sup> Doe & Smith, 2023

<sup>32</sup> Kreft, 2022

<sup>33</sup> Statistics Canada, 2024

<sup>34</sup> Public Safety Canada, 2024

<sup>35</sup> Ottawa Police Service.

Despite this notable decrease, as well as children and youth in care between the ages of 10 to 17 reporting moderately positive relationships with their caregivers<sup>36</sup>, Indigenous and Black children face systemic challenges and over-representation in the child welfare system. Among children and youth in out-of-home care in Ottawa in 2023, 18.8 per cent are from African and Caribbean communities, and 20 per cent are Indigenous.

According to the Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2023<sup>37</sup>, compared to white children, Black children in Ontario were:

- 2.2 times more likely to be investigated;
- 2.5 times more likely to be substantiated;
- 1.5 times more likely to be transferred to ongoing services; and,
- 2.5 times more likely to be placed during the investigation.

The same report<sup>38</sup> finds that compared to non-Indigenous children, Indigenous children in Ontario:

- were investigated at a rate 3 times higher;
- had a transfer rate 6 times higher;
- saw their court applications sent at a rate 3 times higher;
- were placed in kinship care 7 times more frequently; and
- entered formal out-of-home care at a rate 7 times higher.

Factors contributing to this include potential bias in decision-making, with some professionals possibly over-reporting members of equity-denying families to child welfare authorities due to negative assumptions about poverty, race, and risk. This bias extends to policies and practices that may not adequately consider the cultural nuances of Indigenous and Black families. For example, the application of standards that do not account for the cultural and economic realities of Indigenous families can result in children being unnecessarily taken into care.

The systemic disparities faced by Black and Indigenous populations within the child welfare system significantly affect their growth. Transitioning out of the system, these youth often carry trauma and scars that impact their development and well-being. Such experiences can hinder their educational achievements, employment opportunities, and ability to form healthy relationships, perpetuating cycles of disadvantage and marginalization.

---

<sup>36</sup> Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, n.d.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*

## Exposure to Hate Crimes

Hate crimes, defined as criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice towards particular groups, pose a significant threat to the safety and well-being of children and youth. These crimes can range from physical violence to harassment or bullying, deeply impacting young victims' mental health, sense of security, and social development. The effects of hate crimes on children and youth extend beyond immediate physical harm, leading to long-term psychological trauma, fear, and isolation.

As highlighted in Figure 10, the rate of hate crime incidents has significantly increased from 2018 to 2022 in Ottawa, with growth projected to continue. Further analysis of hate crimes in 2022 revealed that race/ethnicity was the leading cause, representing 51.44% of the total reported incidents, followed by religion (24.67%), and sexual orientation (17.6%).

Additionally, the Needs Assessment of Ottawa's 2SLGBTQ+ Youth and Young Adults conducted by Crime Prevention Ottawa highlighted the need for more support for the 2SLGBTQ+ youth as 84% of survey respondents indicated that violence against 2SLGBTQ+ youth and young adults in Ottawa needs wider attention.

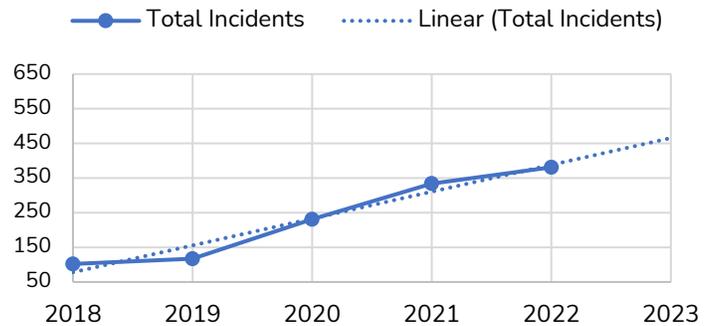
This trend underscores the urgency of addressing hate crimes through comprehensive strategies that not only combat these acts but also support the victims and foster a more inclusive and safer environment for all children and youth in the city.

### The Child and Youth Service Sector – A Snapshot

In Ottawa, the child and youth-serving ecosystem includes a diverse network of actors working collectively on the development of children and youth. This includes community organizations, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and different levels of government agencies, each playing a unique yet interconnected role to facilitate a collective impact. Community organizations offer localized support services, schools provide educational and early intervention programs, healthcare providers address mental and physical health needs, and government agencies fund and deliver policies and programs that contribute to children and youth well-being more broadly, depending on their jurisdictional levels.

Given its close ties to the local communities, the not-for-profit sector is an indispensable player in fostering the healthy development of children and youth in Ottawa. As mentioned earlier in this paper,

**Total Hate Crime Incidents reported in Ottawa 2018-2022**



**Figure 10:** Total Hate Crime Incidents Reported in Ottawa 2018-2022. Ottawa Police Data Portal, 2022

many young people do not have access to the services and the supports they need when they need them, do not have a trusted person they can turn to for support or advice, and feel disconnected from their community, which in some cases has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, access to safer and culturally appropriate spaces and supportive programming can give young people the foundation they need to navigate life's challenges, helping fill developmental gaps caused by systemic inequities and difficult life circumstances.

In response to these challenges, various organizations & entities including the non-profit sector have been implementing programs aimed at creating safer, more supportive environments for children and youth. Table 4 (below), while not exhaustive, provides a snapshot of some of the programs and initiatives in place, illustrating the diverse programming available.

Organizations	Description	Examples of Programs & Initiatives
Crossroads Children's Mental Health Centre (CCMHC)	Develops and delivers a range of individualized mental health services for children under the age of 12 and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently, developing SNACK, a tool that will help CCMHC better understand the scope and reasons for school attendance problems.</li> <li>• Currently, conducting research in collaboration with the University of Ottawa on The Impact of Family Factors on Bullying Involvement.</li> </ul>
City of Ottawa	<p>The following city departments/teams are contributing to the enhancement of children and youth well-being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Services offers a range of supports and services to assist individuals and families in meeting their basic needs, enhancing their quality of life, and promoting social and economic well-being.</li> <li>• The Community Safety and Well-being Office (CSWBO) works across sectors to improve the safety, health, and well-being of Ottawa residents, including children and youth.</li> <li>• The Integrated Neighbourhood Services team helps residents, including youth, understand and access government and community services, as well as funds youth programs.</li> <li>• The Children's Services together with community partners, provide high-quality childcare and early years services that are accessible, inclusive and affordable to all families and are committed to serving Ottawa's most vulnerable families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Futures is a six-month bilingual program that supports high school students, aged 16 to 21. The program helps high school students to succeed in post-secondary education and the workforce, through leadership development, mentorship, employment placement, and post-secondary orientation (a partnership between the City of Ottawa, BGC Ottawa, and the Ottawa Community Housing Foundation).</li> <li>• Paint It Up! is a youth engagement program funded by Public Works and administered by Community and Social Services (CSS). It promotes the use of outdoor murals to support local arts and culture and engage youth in positive skill-building experiences.</li> <li>• Children's Services Professional Learning Program provides training, tools and resources for the childcare and early years workforce on anti-racism, Indigenous pedagogy, mental health and special needs inclusion strategies and incentives to build equity-based working and learning environments across the sector.</li> <li>• The Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program helps meet the needs of young parents on social assistance with</li> </ul>

Organizations	Description	Examples of Programs & Initiatives
		<p>financial and stability support. With the support of a case worker, LEAP provides help to finish high school; develop employment skills; gain work experience; and learn more about parenting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2023, the CSWBO funding was allocated to 18 community agencies to deliver on 19 projects to support racialized youth, prevent gender-based violence against women and girls, and improve community-based access to mental health programs.</li> <li>• The Integrated Neighbourhood Services Team (INST) works with City departments and community partners to support equitable opportunities and address systemic barriers in Ottawa's priority neighbourhoods. Their purpose is to improve the coordination and delivery of City services, focusing on areas like health, housing, and youth engagement. The INST collaborates to create sustainable solutions for complex community issues, targeting specific neighbourhoods needing the most support. They engage with the community through various advisory and action tables, ensuring alignment and leveraging of municipal services to address neighbourhood inequities.</li> </ul>
United Way	Focuses on mobilizing communities to support vulnerable populations, driving social change through funding and collaboration across various programs aimed at improving health, education, and economic stability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• United Way East Ontario invests in various programs under the "All That Kids Can Be" focus area. These investments support initiatives like community-wide homelessness coordination, mentoring programs, after-school programming, and youth-supportive housing. Each program is designed to address specific needs, from educational support and safe spaces to mental health and addiction counseling.</li> </ul>
The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa (CASO)	Provides child welfare services including protection, foster care, and adoption services to ensure the safety and well-being of children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a child or youth requires an out-of-home placement on a temporary or permanent basis, The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa's Family Finding Model guides the workers to explore family and community connections to help establish a safety network, as well as to secure kinship arrangements for children and youth.</li> <li>• In 2022, CASO began operationalizing its Indigenous Service Delivery Model to improve the agency's capacity to support</li> </ul>

Organizations	Description	Examples of Programs & Initiatives
Ottawa Public Health (OPH)	promotes and protects the health of all Ottawa residents focusing on prevention, protection, and health promotion.	<p>First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, youth, and families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPH together with Ottawa school boards, community partners, and stakeholders have developed Youth Connections Ottawa (YCO), a comprehensive, coordinated program for youth engagement and a youth peer-to-peer approach for use in schools and communities in Ottawa.</li> </ul>
Centre D'appui et de Prévention (CAP)	Offers a comprehensive range of mental health and addiction services primarily for the francophone community in Ottawa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CAP offers various mental health services such as individual and family therapy, and specialized programs for children aged 4-12 years old.</li> <li>CAP also offers therapeutic services for youth aged 12-24, a SMART recovery program to help individuals manage addiction, as well as residential services.</li> <li>CAP offers programs designed to assist young parents in navigating parenthood while managing mental health and addiction challenges.</li> </ul>
John Howard Society	Works to develop understanding and effective responses to crime and its causes, with a focus on rehabilitation and reintegration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In partnership with the National African Integration and Families Association (NAIFA) crossroads youth program provides coordinated and integrated support services focused on preventing youth from engaging in criminal behaviours.</li> </ul>
Youth Services Bureau (YSB)	provides a wide array of programs and services to support at-risk youth and their families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key services include mental health support through their Youth Mental Health Walk-In Clinic and 24/7 Crisis Line, providing immediate and accessible assistance.</li> <li>Housing services include emergency shelters and transitional housing programs to help homeless youth find safe, stable living conditions.</li> <li>Employment services offer job placement, counseling, and trades training at the Tamarack Trades Training Centre.</li> <li>YSB also operates the William E. Hay Centre and provides support through the Youth Mental Health Court Worker Program.</li> </ul>
Big Brothers and Big Sisters	Mentoring organization for children and youth that fosters meaningful, supportive relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Leaders of Tomorrow Scholarship was designed to assist students affiliated with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto with financial support for their post-secondary education.</li> <li>The EdgePoint Partnering for Success Scholarship (the "Scholarship") provides</li> </ul>

Organizations	Description	Examples of Programs & Initiatives
Youth Net (Réseau Ado)	Is a mental health promotion and intervention program run by youth, for youth, based out of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO).	<p>access to post-secondary education and rewards youth who demonstrate community leadership with a focus on equity-deserving young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The program is designed to help young people develop coping skills and resilience through various creative and physical activities, making mental health support more accessible and engaging for them.</li> <li>Pens and Paints is an example of an initiative Youth Net has in place, which is an art-based program that helps youth express their emotions and manage stress through creative activities.</li> </ul>
Ten Oaks Project	Engages and supports children and youth from LGBTQ+ communities through programs and activities that promote inclusivity and empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization aims to create safe spaces where LGBTQ+ youth can build confidence, community, and leadership skills.</li> <li>Camp Ten Oaks is a summer camp offered through the organization for LGBTQ+ youth and children from LGBTQ+ families, offering various activities in a supportive environment.</li> <li>Additionally, Project Acorn is also an initiative the Organization offers, which is a leadership retreat for LGBTQ+ youth aged 16-24, focusing on community building, identity exploration, and skill development.</li> </ul>
Ottawa Inuit Children's Centre	Provides cultural, educational, and recreational programs for Inuit children and youth in Ottawa.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organization offers childcare and early learning programs that incorporate Inuit culture and language.</li> <li>It also provides after-school programs, summer camps, and cultural activities designed to engage and support Inuit youth.</li> <li>Additionally, it incorporates resources and activities for Inuit families to strengthen community bonds and cultural connections.</li> </ul>
Community Houses	Play a vital role in supporting children and youth through various programs that aid their development, education, and well-being. They often collaborate with local organizations and health centres to provide comprehensive community support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Britannia Woods Community House provides after-school programs, summer camps, and youth leadership workshops, focusing on academic support, personal development, and recreational activities.</li> <li>Banff Avenue Community House offers educational support, recreational programs, and community-building activities tailored to the needs of children and youth.</li> <li>Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) collaborates with various community houses to offer a range of programs and services, including educational support,</li> </ul>



Organizations	Description	Examples of Programs & Initiatives
Community Health Centres (CHCs)	provide essential services to children and youth, focusing on their health, development, and well-being. These centres offer programs addressing physical health, mental health, social development, and educational support.	<p>recreational activities, and community engagement initiatives for children and youth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre provides early years programs, youth engagement initiatives, and comprehensive health services including mental health counselling and primary care for children and youth.</li> <li>• Carlington Community Health Centre operates school-based health clinics, after-school programs, and nutrition and cooking classes, offering healthcare services and promoting better nutrition and health awareness.</li> </ul>
The Door Youth Centre	Offers a safe, supportive, and inclusive environment where youth can have access to programs and services that promote their well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Centre offers a nightly dinner program that emphasizes healthy eating. The youth are involved in the entire process including meal preparation, sharing food, and assisting in cleanup.</li> <li>• Girl's Night at the Door is an event run once a month for female members to enjoy some time away from the boys and learn about women empowerment-specific programs including positive body image and women in the workforce information sessions.</li> </ul>
Youturn	Provides services for high-risk youth and those who have been in conflict with the law.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Youth in Transition Worker program aims to support youth in their successful transition out of the child welfare system into adulthood.</li> <li>• Youth Support Services provides targeted services to young people between the ages of 12-21 who are at high risk of involvement in street-level violence through the On Point program.</li> </ul>
The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB)	Provides educational services to students in the Ottawa area, focusing on creating safe, caring, and inclusive learning environments to promote student success and well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCDSB has joined other Ontario school boards in legal action against Meta Platforms Inc. (Facebook and Instagram), Snap Inc. (SnapChat), and ByteDance Ltd. (TikTok) to address disruptions to student learning and the education system caused by these platforms.</li> <li>• OCDSB offers summer language classes and camps for Junior Kindergarten to Grade 8 students, aimed at igniting a passion for languages and cultural appreciation.</li> </ul>
Youth Ottawa	Empowers youth to drive positive change in their communities through various programs and initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Youth Ottawa Council focuses on raising awareness about youth issues in Ottawa and educating young people on the functions of municipal government. This</li> </ul>

Organizations	Description	Examples of Programs & Initiatives
		<p>includes hosting workshops and training sessions for youth to facilitate knowledge transfer opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organization collaborates with youth to advocate for youth-friendly policies and aims to integrate these policies into City programs.</li> <li>• The Council also organizes community events to foster a sense of belonging and community spirit among young people. As part of their efforts, they are also developing a youth council to further engage and empower the youth in the community.</li> </ul>
Boys and Girls Club of Ottawa (BGCO)	Offers a variety of programs aimed at helping children and youth achieve their potential, including education, health, and leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighbourhood Ambassador Program (NAP): In collaboration with Ottawa Public Health and other local organizations, NAP promotes COVID-19 safety, supports youth development activities, and provides professional development opportunities for youth ambassadors.</li> <li>• Ottawa Community Youth Diversion Program (OCYDP): This program helps divert youth aged 12-17 from the formal justice system by offering extrajudicial measures and sanctions. It aims to hold youth accountable while addressing factors related to criminal activity and preventing further involvement in the justice system.</li> <li>• Provincial Youth Outreach Workers (PYOW): This initiative helps youth aged 12-24 in Ottawa connect with necessary programs and services through outreach in various community settings, focusing on identifying needs and providing tailored support.</li> <li>• Park Animation Community Team (PACT): PACT offers free, place-based recreational programs for children and youth in priority neighborhoods during the summer. It aims to provide accessible activities and refer participants to additional services and resources.</li> <li>• Youth Futures: This program supports equity-deserving youth aged 16-21 in completing high school and transitioning to post-secondary education, providing workshops and experiential learning opportunities.</li> </ul>

Organizations	Description	Examples of Programs & Initiatives
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth Leadership Collective: This collective brings together community organizations to help youth develop skills crucial for employment success, focusing on collaborative support and skill-building.</li> <li>• Youth in Trades: This program offers equity-deserving youth exposure to various careers in the trades, providing skill development and experiential learning to enhance employability and job readiness.</li> </ul>
Centre for Resilience and Social Development (CRSD)	Provides culturally responsive trauma-informed services for children, youth, and families, focusing on social equity and systemic barriers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and Reports: Develop reports that address critical issues affecting youth, particularly among marginalized groups in Ottawa. They cover topics such as the impact of cannabis use on IRER youth mental health, the shift from punitive to preventative approaches in addressing street-based youth violence, and an exploration of the structural causes behind such violence. Additionally, they investigate alternative, non-legal responses to gender-based violence. The overall focus is on understanding and addressing the underlying factors contributing to these issues, promoting supportive and community-driven solutions.</li> <li>• RAJO (Hope) Project: Uses the Trauma Systems Therapy Model to support youth and families affected by trauma.</li> <li>• Project Moyo: Supports children and youth impacted by street violence, gun violence, and homicides.</li> <li>• Student and Family Advocacy Program (SFA): Assists youth navigating the criminal justice system.</li> </ul>
Social Planning and Council of Ottawa (SPCO)	Catalyst for sustainable social and economic development in the community. Delivers three core services, using community development approaches to drive positive change.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusive Social Planning: Collaborating with partners to design new program approaches and systems solutions that address unmet needs and enhance community well-being (e.g., 'Strengthening Communities Through Collective Efforts: Addressing Gun Violence').</li> <li>• Research: Conducting in-depth research to understand the needs of Ottawa's most vulnerable population and identify avenues for systemic change (e.g., participatory research through civic engagement).</li> <li>• Capacity Building: Providing training and support to organizations and stakeholders addressing critical issues, with a focus on</li> </ul>

Organizations	Description	Examples of Programs & Initiatives
		equity and inclusive environments (e.g., economic incubators).

Table 4: Snapshot of the Child and Youth Service Sector and examples of the programs and initiatives in place.

## Youth Services Sector Strengths and Challenges

### Strengths

The youth services sector in Ottawa offers a comprehensive network of programs aimed at the development of children and youth, including educational, mental health, and vocational support. One key strength of the sector is the collaboration and opportunities for partnerships among different stakeholders and various organizations that serve children and youth in Ottawa. This collaborative approach highlights the sector's importance in ensuring services reach a broad spectrum of the children and youth population, promoting equitable access to necessary supports and resources.

Successful partnerships are evident with initiatives like Britannia Woods Community House, which collaborates with local schools to provide after-school programs, summer camps, and leadership workshops, supporting both academic and personal development. Pincrest-Queensway Community Health Centre also works with schools to offer accessible healthcare services through school-based health clinics, enhancing physical and mental health support for students. Additionally, the sector is committed to diversity and inclusivity, focusing on reaching equity-deserving groups and ensuring equitable access to resources and support.

### Challenges and Potential Solutions

Despite its many strengths the sector faces significant challenges that impede its ability to sustain and expand services. The most pressing issue is financial sustainability.

Fluctuations and unpredictability in funding streams undermine long-term planning and the expansion of services, thus limiting the sector's capacity to meet the increasing or evolving needs of children and youth.

- Advocacy for stable funding from government sources and exploring diverse funding avenues such as private donations, grants, and business partnerships are potential solutions to this challenge.

Another challenge is the lack of information and data sharing among service providers and other players in the child and youth-serving ecosystem. The current landscape is somewhat fragmented, with multiple entities operating in silos, complicating the navigation of services for youth and potentially leading to gaps in service delivery.

- Developing integrated service networks and implementing centralized information systems could facilitate better coordination and ensure a more seamless service delivery.

Finally, there is a need for more upstream interventions that address the root causes of issues faced by children and youth rather than just responding to immediate needs. The pandemic has highlighted systemic issues and oppressive practices that equity-deserving groups have faced for decades. There is a growing call for cultural responsiveness to their needs and for dismantling such oppressive structures.

- Providing ongoing cultural competency training for service providers and advocating for policy reforms aimed at promoting equity within the service delivery framework are potential solutions to these challenges.

In summary, while the youth services sector in Ottawa has numerous strengths, including successful partnerships and a commitment to diversity and inclusivity, addressing the challenges of financial sustainability, information and data sharing, and the need for upstream interventions will be crucial for the sector to continue supporting the development and well-being of children and youth effectively.

## Conclusion

With children and youth navigating an increasingly complex world marked by economic uncertainty and various forms of violence, a strategic approach rooted in collaboration, equity, and social justice is crucial to enhancing their well-being and safety.

This paper has shown that tailored interventions are required across different stages of their development to address children's various needs, alongside robust support systems. Strengthening the child-and-youth-serving sector by enhanced coordination, collaboration, data-sharing, and financial sustainability will pave the way for a safer, more inclusive future.

Collective impact and preventative methodologies aimed at addressing the underlying issues affecting children and youth safety and wellbeing are proven to be highly effective. This goes hand-in-hand with place-based interventions and readily available support to ensure a holistic approach to their development. This will equip children and youth and support them throughout their developmental journey as they navigate the critical stages leading into adulthood.

Addressing the systemic barriers that equity-deserving groups face is fundamental to achieving long-term positive outcomes. This includes not only providing immediate support but also advocating for policy reforms that promote equity and inclusiveness. Implementing ongoing cultural competency training for service providers and ensuring that all policies and programs are viewed through an intersectional lens will help dismantle oppressive structures and practices.

While the youth services sector in Ottawa has numerous strengths, including successful partnerships and a commitment to diversity and inclusivity, addressing the challenges of financial sustainability, information and data sharing, and the need for upstream interventions will be crucial for the sector to continue supporting the development and well-being of children and youth effectively. By adopting a comprehensive, collaborative, and inclusive approach, we can create a brighter and more equitable future for all children and youth in Ottawa.

## References

- Allen, K.A. (2022). The science of school belonging. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sense-belonging/202201/the-science-school-belonging>
- Bailey, K.A. (2020) Indigenous students: resilient and empowered in the midst of racism and lateral violence, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43:6, 1032-1051, DOI: 10.1080/01419870.2019.1626015
- Bradley, E.H., et al. (2022). Youth Well-being During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Pediatrics*, 149(4), Article e2021054754. Retrieved from <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/149/4/e2021054754/185416/Youth-Well-being-During-the-COVID-19-Pandemic>
- Cameron, A. & Tedds, L.M. (2020). Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) and Intersectionality: Overview, an Enhanced Framework, and a British Columbia Case Study. Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3781905> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3781905>
- Carman, T. & Wesley, A. (2020) (2020). School absence data. *CBC News*. Retrieved in April 2024 from <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/school-absence-data-1.7156254>
- Community Foundation of Ottawa. (n.d.). Food Security. *Ottawa Insights*. Retrieved from <https://www.ottawainsights.ca/themes/basic-needs-and-standard-of-living/food-security/#fdnscrtyffct>
- Crime Prevention Ottawa (2021). Needs assessment of Ottawa 2SLGBTQ youth and young adults with regard to violence prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.crimepreventionottawa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Needs-Assessment-Of-Ottawa-2SLGBTQ-Youth-And-Young-Adults-With-Regard-To-Violence-Prevention-2021.pdf>
- Del Giudice, M. (2017). Middle Childhood: An Evolutionary-Developmental Synthesis. In *Handbook of Life Course Health Development*. National Center for Biotechnology Information. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK543719/>
- Department of Justice Canada (n.d.). Overrepresentation of Black people in the Canadian criminal justice system. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/obpccjs-spnsjpc/index.html>
- Department of Justice Canada. (n.d.). Overrepresentation in the criminal justice system: A portrait. Retrieved from <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/jr/oip-cjs/oip-cjs-en.pdf>
- Doe, J. & Smith, A.B. (2023). Title of the article on forensic psychiatry. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 51(1), 112-120. Retrieved from <https://jaapl.org/content/jaapl/51/1/112.full.pdf>
- Disability Without Poverty (2023). *Disability Without Poverty Report Card 2023*. Retrieved from [https://www.disabilitywithoutpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/DWP-Report-Card-23-FINAL\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.disabilitywithoutpoverty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/DWP-Report-Card-23-FINAL_compressed.pdf)

Etowa, J., Tharao, W., Mbuagbaw, L., et al. (2022). Community perspectives on addressing and responding to HIV-testing, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) among African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) people in Ontario, Canada. *BMC Public Health* 22, 913. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-022-13093-0>

Gajaria, A., Guzder, J., & Rasasingham, R. (2022). How to address racism's impacts on child and adolescent mental health in Canada. EENet. Retrieved from <https://kmb.camh.ca/eenet/resources/research-viewpoint-how-to-address-racism-s-impacts-on-child-and-adolescent-mental-health-in-canada>

Kreft, A.K. (2023). "This Patriarchal, Machista and Unequal Culture of Ours": Obstacles to Confronting Conflict-Related Sexual Violence, *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, Volume 30(2), 654–677. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxac01>

Laidlaw Foundation (2023). The state of Black and Indigenous youth. Retrieved from [https://laidlawfdn.org/assets/the-state-of-black-and-indigenous-youth\\_nov-2023-\(final-copy\)-\(1\).pdf](https://laidlawfdn.org/assets/the-state-of-black-and-indigenous-youth_nov-2023-(final-copy)-(1).pdf)

MakeWay (n.d.). Ontario Indigenous Youth Partnership Project. Retrieved in April 2024 from <https://makeway.org/project/ontario-indigenous-youth-partnership-project/>

Mental Health Commission of Canada (2021). COVID-19 and early childhood mental health: Policy brief. Retrieved from [https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/2021-06/covid\\_early\\_child\\_mental\\_health\\_policy\\_brief\\_eng\\_2](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/wp-content/uploads/drupal/2021-06/covid_early_child_mental_health_policy_brief_eng_2)

Neighbourhood Equity Index (n.d.). Social domain. Retrieved from <https://neighbourhoodequity.ca/social-domain/>

Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (n.d.). Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect 2023 (OIS-2023). Retrieved from [https://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/OACAS%20webinar\\_final%20final.pdf](https://cwrp.ca/sites/default/files/publications/OACAS%20webinar_final%20final.pdf)

Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (n.d.). Performance indicator trends. Retrieved from <https://www.oacas.org/data-results/performance-indicator-trends/>

Ontario Ministry of Finance (2023). Ontario Population Projections. Government of Ontario. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ontario-population-projections>

Ottawa Food Bank (2023). Hunger report 2023. Retrieved from [https://feedontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FEED\\_OntarioHungerReport23.pdf](https://feedontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/FEED_OntarioHungerReport23.pdf)

Ottawa Neighbourhood Study (2024). A housing profile of Ottawa. ArcGIS StoryMaps. Retrieved from <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/a69169fb734e4caa9d69f4ecbaf6d174>

Ottawa Neighbourhood Study (n.d.). Population & age: % Children aged 0-14. Retrieved from <https://www.neighbourhoodstudy.ca/maps-2/#General%20Demographics/Population%20&%20age/%25%20Children%20aged%200-14>

Ottawa Police Service (n.d.). Data Portal. Retrieved from <https://data.ottawapolice.ca/>

Ottawa Public Health (2021). Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) Mental Health and Substance Use Highlights 2021. Retrieved from [https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/reports-research-and-statistics/resources/Documents/OSDUHS\\_MHASUH\\_2021\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/reports-research-and-statistics/resources/Documents/OSDUHS_MHASUH_2021_EN.pdf)

Ottawa Public Health (2021). Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey (OSDUHS) Mental Health and Well-Being Report. Retrieved from [https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/reports-research-and-statistics/resources/Documents/OSDUHS\\_MHASUH\\_2021\\_EN.pdf](https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/reports-research-and-statistics/resources/Documents/OSDUHS_MHASUH_2021_EN.pdf)

Ottawa Public Health (n.d.). Immigrant and diverse populations. Retrieved on April 1, 2024 from <https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-services/immigrant-a-diverse-populations.aspx>

Ottawa Police Service. (n.d.). Human trafficking. Ottawa Police Service. Retrieved July 10, 2024, from <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/who-we-are/human-trafficking.aspx>

Pathways to Education Canada (n.d.). Student absenteeism is on the rise. Here's why it matters. Pathways to Education. Retrieved from <https://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/research/student-absenteeism-is-on-the-rise-heres-why-it-matters/>

Parent Resource Centre (2019). Our kids, their story: A snapshot of children and youth in Ottawa. Retrieved from <https://parentresource.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Our-Kids-Their-Story-Ottawa.pdf>

Racine, N. & Premji, S. (2024). Child poverty is on the rise in Canada, putting over 1 million kids at risk of life-long negative effects. The Conversation. Retrieved from <https://theconversation.com/child-poverty-is-on-the-rise-in-canada-putting-over-1-million-kids-at-risk-of-life-long-negative-effects-221565>

Rural Ottawa Youth (n.d.). Home. Retrieved in April 2024 from <https://www.ruralottawayouth.ca/>

Statistics Canada (2021). Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population: Ottawa, City (Census subdivision), Ontario. Retrieved on April 1, 2024 from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&GENDERlist=1&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0&DGUIDlist=2021A00053506008&SearchText=ottawa>

Statistics Canada (2021). Projections of the Indigenous populations and households in Canada, 2016 to 2041. Retrieved on April 1, 2024 from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211006/dq211006a-eng.htm>

Statistics Canada (2021). Police-reported online child sexual exploitation in Canada, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/240312/dq240312b-eng.htm>



Statistics Canada (2024). Projections of the Indigenous populations and households in Canada, 2016 to 2041. Retrieved on April 1, 2024 from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/211006/dq211006a-eng.htm>

Statistics Canada. *Table 11-10-0018-01 After-tax low-income status of tax filers and dependants based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition*. Available [here](#)

Statistics Canada. *Table 98-10-0115-01 Individual Market Basket Measure poverty status by visible minority groups and demographic characteristics: Canada, provinces and territories, census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations with parts*. Available [here](#)

United Way East Ontario (n.d.). All that kids can be. Retrieved from <https://www.unitedwayeo.ca/our-impact/all-that-kids-can-be/>

World Health Organization (n.d.). Early childhood development. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/southeastasia/activities/early-childhood-development>

World Health Organization (2023). New WHO–HBSC data shed light on COVID-19 pandemic's effects on children and adolescents. WHO. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/28-06-2023-new-who-hbsc-data-shed-light-on-covid-19-pandemic-s-effects-on-children-and-adolescents>