



**every**  
**STUDENT COUNTS**  
**SURVEY**

**YRDSB Every Student Counts Survey  
Themed Research Reports  
Trends Towards Postsecondary  
Pathways**

**February 2023**

## Land Acknowledgement



We affirm that we are all treaty people and acknowledge that the York Region District School Board is located on the lands of two treaties. These treaties have been signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and the First Nations of the Williams Treaties who are: the Mississaugas of Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Scugog Island; and the Chippewas of Beausoleil, Rama, and Georgina Island who is our closest neighbor and partner in education.

To honour this agreement, we will take up our responsibility to be respectful of their traditions, knowledge and inherent rights as sovereign nations. We will respect their relationship with these lands and recognize that our connection to this land is through the continued relationship with these First Nations, and we acknowledge our shared responsibility to respect and care for the land and waters for future generations.



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**Title:** YRDSB Every Student Counts Survey Themed Research Reports. Trends Towards Post-Secondary Pathways

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### **Report Accessibility**

Feedback regarding this Every Student Count Survey Themed Research Report is both encouraged and essential for advancing accessibility at YRDSB in a way that recognizes the needs of all learners and community members.

To provide feedback or questions about report accessibility, or if you require the report in a different format for accessibility purpose, please contact:

The Human Rights Commissioner's Office, York Region District School Board, Dr. Bette Stephenson Centre for Learning, Room 202, 36 Regatta Avenue Richmond Hill, Ontario L4E 4R1. Phone: 905-884-2046 ext. 311. Email: [aoda@yrdsb.ca](mailto:aoda@yrdsb.ca)

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## YRDSB Every Student Counts Survey (ESCS), Themed Research Reports: Trends Towards Postsecondary Pathways

York Region District School Board (YRDSB) is committed to improving student achievement and well-being by working to ensure equitable, accessible, inclusive, and healthy learning environments. The Board recognizes that marginalized students face systemic barriers through policies, programs and practices that create or maintain disadvantages for these students. Ensuring equitable, accessible and inclusive learning environments, therefore, requires the intentional identification and removal of systemic barriers to student success and well-being. To this end, in 2018, YRDSB conducted the **Every Student Counts Survey** to:

- Identify and eliminate systemic barriers to student success;
- Create more equitable and inclusive school environments; and
- Improve student achievement and well-being.

As outlined in this report, findings from the ESCS point to disparities, or differences, in student experiences and outcomes based on socio-demographic characteristics including, but not limited to, gender identity, race, and special education needs. YRDSB recognizes that the disparities across demographics are the result of inequities within and beyond schools and school boards and **are not a reflection of deficits within students and families**. As such, it is important to review findings in this report with the understanding that:

- Biases must be examined to ensure that students, families, and communities are not further marginalized or stigmatized in reviewing and interpreting data,
- Disparities in student experiences and outcomes reflect systemic inequities; and,
- Responses to disparities in student outcomes must focus on strategies and initiatives to promote equitable institutional structures and practices.

### Anti-Oppression Note

This research report aims to prompt critical dialogue toward positive social change for underserved groups of students as well as aims to illuminate systemic barriers certain groups of students may be facing and continue to face in schools, particularly regarding Postsecondary pathways. It is important for us to emphasize that the opportunity gaps found within this report are attributed to the social inequities perpetuated by systems of power, which requires steps toward positive social change for underserved groups of students (Oluo, 2018) and are not at all a reflection of deficits within students and families. As such, it is important to review these findings within this report through an Anti-Oppressive Framework. Before reading any further, we encourage readers to read the anti-oppressive prompts listed below and to keep them front and center when engaging with the findings of this report.



## Engaging with ESCS with an Anti-Oppressive Framework

The following questions are intended to support readers of this report in using an anti-oppression framework to review the ESCS findings:

- What do you notice about the data?
- What stands out for you?
- How does your social location influence how you interpret the data?
- How will you shift or maintain your focus on looking at systems and structures (e.g., school practices, school environment, school board practices) rather than attributing students' experiences and outcomes to deficits within students and families?
- What does the data suggest about the experiences of students and their families?
- What assumptions or inferences might you be making about students and their families based on the data?
- Whose voices may not be represented in the data?
- In what ways are the data similar to, or different from, other data sources (e.g., municipal, community agencies, other school boards)?
- What additional data sources are needed to understand both complementary and divergent perspectives regarding educational experiences?

## Moving forward: Strategies and Actions in Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) and Director's Action Plan (DAP)

Several system supports have been implemented to promote improved pathways:

- Collaborate with stakeholder groups to promote shifts in system and school cultures to identify and dismantle streaming ideologies found in policies, programs, and practices that contribute to systemic discrimination and structural inequities; with the goal of eliminating identity-based disproportionalities in achievement, well-being, graduation, and Postsecondary acceptance.
- Continue to increase educator capacity for implementing high impact instructional and assessment strategies, with a particular focus on supporting teachers of the new MTH1W Grade 9 mathematics course. Teams in Curriculum and Instructional Services, in collaboration with classroom teachers, have developed resources to support: o long-range planning and building community within the classroom; o pedagogical supports that include ideas for teaching coding and financial literacy, and teaching in a way that is culturally relevant and responsive; o assessment supports; o materials that connect the new Grade 7 and 8 math courses to the new Grade 9 and the new Grade 9 to the Grade 10 math course, and; o content resources to support student learning.
- Professional learning will continue to be provided throughout the year, initially in a virtual format afterschool, with the hope of returning to a network model that would include teachers and administrators from all elementary and secondary schools. Topics for network learning include unpacking the new elementary and

Grade 9 mathematics curricula, transitions and course selection, and the revisiting of historical practices that have contributed to streaming.

- Continue to support elementary administrators and teachers, including transitions teachers, in their work with supporting Grade 8 students and their families with regard to making course selections in all subjects that keep options open so that students may have every opportunity to pursue the pathway of their choice after their K-12 education. Professional learning for administrators and teachers will include a focus on gaining a better understanding of course pathway implications so that they may help students to better understand course selections.
- Continue to support students and families with the purpose and practice of de-streaming by sharing information at school-based Curriculum Night events as well as through materials made available on the board's public website. These materials have been available in a number of languages and will be updated throughout the year and as other Grade 9 courses are de-streamed.

## Executive Summary

Given that postsecondary education is strongly connected to both lifelong earnings and long-term health, it is important to examine key trends regarding pathways (e.g., admission into university, college, early-leavers, etc.) at YRDSB. The vast majority of Canadian secondary students transition to college or university upon graduating high school. One of the best available measures to examine postsecondary transitions is postsecondary confirmation patterns over Years 4 and 5. This report is a two-year cohort study of Grade 12 students. The postsecondary confirmation variable is constructed through two successive years of applications through the Ontario University (OUAC) and college (OCAS) application systems.

For this analysis, we examined YRDSB students who were in their fourth year of high school as of November 2018 when they wrote the **Every Student Counts Survey**. The postsecondary confirmation status is a result of student applications over the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years (that is, Grade 12 Years 4 and 5). The vast majority of these Grade 12 students (84%) applied for admission to an Ontario postsecondary institution, and over three quarters confirmed an offer of admission: 61% from an Ontario university and 17% from an Ontario college. Since most YRDSB students directly transitioned into postsecondary, the key difference between groups is between those entering a university versus those entering a college.

Postsecondary pathways showed some noticeable **socio-demographic** differences:

**Race:** the vast majority of students across the various Indigenous and racial identity groups transitioned to a postsecondary institution. There was, however, a wide range of university versus college attainment. Particularly noteworthy was that of students who self-identified as East Asian: 76% confirmed admission to a university in Ontario while 8% confirmed admission to a college. In contrast, fewer than half of students who self-identified as Black and Latino/a/x confirmed admission to a university. Interestingly, the category of No Race Selection had fewer than half confirming admission to a university. Students who self-identified as Latino/a/x also had the highest proportion of students who did not apply to postsecondary.

Students who self-identified as Indigenous were less likely, compared to those students who were not Indigenous, to confirm admission to a university (37% compared to 61%), but were much more likely to confirm admission to a college and much more likely not to apply to a postsecondary institution all together.

**Sexual Orientation:** the categories with the highest rate of postsecondary access were Questioning, Gender Fluid, those who did not understand the question, and Woman/Girl. While the majority of all categories transitioned to postsecondary, the lowest transition rates were those students who preferred not to answer; those who self-identified as Non-Binary and transgender.

There was wide variation of postsecondary access according to responses to the **Sexual Orientation** question. Those who did not participate in the question and those who self-identified as Two-Spirit were the largest proportion who did not apply to

postsecondary institutions. Those who self-identified as Heterosexual and Questioning, their sexual orientation had the highest proportion confirming university admissions.

**Family Structure:** students from two-parent households were more likely to go to an Ontario university (66%) compared to those from one parent and other family structures. Those from other family structures, that is, other than one or two parent households, were much more likely not to apply to postsecondary institutions.

**Born inside/outside Canada:** There was little difference between those born inside and outside Canada, in terms of students going to university, while those born in Canada were more likely to go to college.

Compared to students in the **lowest income neighbourhoods**, those in the highest income neighbourhoods were more likely to confirm university admissions. Those in the lowest income neighbourhoods were more likely to confirm college and were also more likely to not apply to postsecondary all together.

### **Achievement Patterns**

The largest differences in postsecondary outcomes were associated with **previous achievement patterns**:

- The majority of students from Levels 1 to 4 in **Grade 6 EQAO** later made the transition to postsecondary, but the difference was in university versus college. The majority of students who achieved Levels 3 and 4 in Grade 6 later attended university. The majority of students at Levels 2 and below did not.
- **Grade 8 ERC Mathematics** shows a similar association to postsecondary pathways as Grade 6 EQAO Mathematics. Most students below Level 3 in Grade 8 Mathematics did not go to university, while most at Level 3 (61%) and Level 4 (81%) in Grade 8 Mathematics went to university. **Grade 8 Reading and Writing** patterns are very similar to Grade 6 EQAO and Grade 8 ERC Mathematics—making it clear that the association is one of early achievement patterns in general, rather than an association attributable to one subject (e.g. numeracy and literacy).
- There is also a strong relationship of **Grade 9 EQAO Academic** to achievement since most of those at Levels 3 and 4 confirmed university admissions and most of those at Level 2 and below did not (The vast majority of Academic students were at Levels 3 and 4). One sees a very different picture with **Grade 9 EQAO Applied**. Regardless of achievement level, most Grade 9 students did not make the transition to university: around half of students at Level 1 confirmed college, as did students at Level 4.
- Almost three quarters of first-time eligible Grade 10 students who were successful at the first administration of the **Grade 10 Literacy Test (OSSLT)** transitioned to university. Students who were unsuccessful, absent or deferred were less likely to go to university. Those absent or deferred were much more likely not to apply to postsecondary at all.

## School and School Structures:

- Students identified with **Special Education Needs** (not including Gifted) were more likely to go to college than university (36% compared to 30%). In contrast, 66% of those students identified without Special Education Needs, and 82% of students identified with a Gifted exceptionality, transitioned to university. Students identified with Autism, Behavioral, Developmental Disability, Language Impairment, Learning Disability, Mild Intellectual Disability, and Physical Disability were unlikely to make the direct transition to university. Indeed, the majority of those with Autism, Developmental Disability, and Mild Intellectual Disability, did not apply to postsecondary.
- Students **suspended** over the 2018-19 school year had amongst the largest observed university-pathway gap—around a quarter (26%) of suspended students transitioned to university, compared to almost two thirds (61%) of those not suspended that year.
- **Grade 9 Program of Study:** the vast majority (85%) of students taking a majority of Academic courses in Grade 9 confirmed an offer of admission from an Ontario postsecondary institution -- around three quarters of them confirmed an offer of admission from a university. Of students taking Applied courses, slightly under two thirds confirmed postsecondary admissions, most, however, confirmed an Ontario college admission. The majority of students taking Locally-Developed courses did not transition into postsecondary studies.
- 85%-87% of students completing an **English, Mathematics or Science Grade 12 U course** confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario postsecondary (generally to university), showing a strong connection of postsecondary access and Grade 12 U courses.

## Introduction

A generation ago, high school was generally the highest education level completed by most Canadians. In recent years, however, the vast majority of Canadians transition to postsecondary institutions, and two thirds or more will ultimately complete a postsecondary credential. Given that most new jobs in the immediate future will require postsecondary education, and that postsecondary education is strongly connected to both lifetime earnings and long-term health, it is important to examine key trends regarding pathways at YRDSB (OECD, 2022).

### Postsecondary Confirmation

With YRDSB students, one of the best available measures to examine postsecondary transitions is postsecondary confirmation patterns over Years 4 and 5. This report is a two-year cohort study of Grade 12 students. This multiple year process offers a comprehensive look at transitions since many Grade 12 students may return for an additional fifth or lap year before applying for postsecondary school. Additionally, many students who were unsuccessful in Grade 12 Year 4 will make an additional (and often successful) application in Year 5.

The postsecondary confirmation variable is constructed through two successive years of applications through the Ontario University (OUAC) and college (OCAS) application systems. Students are organized into four categories:

- Did not apply to postsecondary;
- Applied to postsecondary but did not confirm an offer of admission from an Ontario postsecondary institution;
- Confirmed an offer of admission of an Ontario community college;
- Confirmed an offer of admission of an Ontario university.

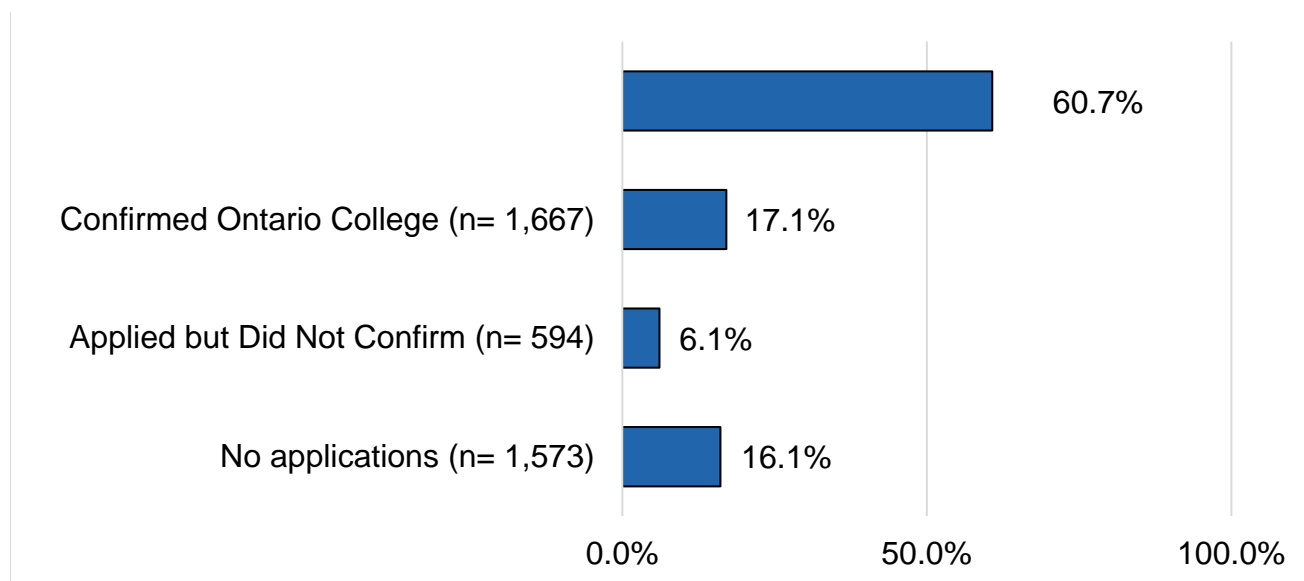
### Postsecondary Confirmations Grade 12 Year 4 Students

Figure 1 shows the postsecondary pathways of Grade 12 students who were in their fourth year of secondary school as of November 2018 when they wrote the **Every Student Counts Survey**. The postsecondary confirmations status is a result of student applications over the 2018-19 and 2019-20 school years (that is, Grade 12 Years 4 and 5). The vast majority of these Grade 12 students (84%) applied for admission to an Ontario postsecondary institution, and over three quarters confirmed an offer of admission: 61% from an Ontario university and 17% from an Ontario college.

**Table 1: Postsecondary confirmations for Students in Grade 12 Year 4 in 2018-2019**

Cohort	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied but Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
2015-2016 Cohort	16.1%	6.1%	17.1%	60.7%	9766
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,932</b>	-

**Figure 1: Postsecondary Confirmations of Grade 12 Year 4 Students 2018-19**



### The Connection of Postsecondary Confirmations to Postsecondary Completion

Recent research connected TDSB postsecondary confirmations (similar to the methodology used here) to information available from Statistic Canada’s Postsecondary Information System (PSIS), showing long-term graduation rates from Canadian colleges and universities.

- Of students who confirmed an offer of admission from an Ontario university, almost all (98%) were found to enter Canadian postsecondary studies, and the vast majority (83%) graduated.
- Of students who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario college, the vast majority entered postsecondary studies (89%) while a majority (58%) graduated.
- Of students who applied to an Ontario postsecondary institution but did not confirm, most ended up in a Canadian postsecondary institution, the majority entered postsecondary (79%) while half graduated.
- However, of students who did not apply to Ontario postsecondary over five years of secondary school, most (59%) had no record of study at a Canadian

postsecondary institution, and slightly over a fifth ended up with a Canadian tertiary credential (roughly split between college and university).

Thus, it appears that the postsecondary confirmation patterns show the general picture, although by no means the complete picture, of postsecondary completion. This is important as it means that **the patterns of postsecondary access seen in this report are most likely to reflect the ultimate patterns of postsecondary completion for most (although not all) students.**

## Organization of the Report

Variables are organized into three sections: A) socio-demographic variables, B) achievement variables, and C) variables related to school and school structure. Each section has both tables and charts, and each chart shows a Disproportionality Index score (explained in more detail below) for each variable based on that groups representation among students who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario university.

## Disproportionality Index

Following Anti-Racism Data Standards (ARDS) guidelines and through internal and external consultations, we established methods to use a valid measure to quantify inequalities within various identity groups. One of these measures is Disproportionality Index.

### Definition

Disproportionality Index is “a measure of an identity group’s overrepresentation or underrepresentation in a program, service, or function relative to the group’s representation in the reference population” (ARDS). Disproportionality Index is a reliable and valid measure that is widely used to quantify inequalities within a program, service, or function when reviewing special education for this report. Our intention is to examine the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of students within certain identity groups by calculating the Disproportionality index.

### Calculation

The Disproportionality Index is calculated using this equation:

$$\text{Disproportionality Index (Group A)} = \frac{\left( \frac{\text{\# of Group A in an SEN Program}}{\text{Total \# of Students in an SEN Program}} \right)}{\left( \frac{\text{\# of Group A in an SEN Program}}{\text{Total \# of Students in Population}} \right)}$$

### Interpretation Using a Threshold

Disproportionality Index can be compared to “1” as the basic threshold and interpreted using the following rule:

If Disproportionality Index (Group A)

**>1** Group A is overrepresented in a SEN program.



**=1** Group A is equitably represented in a SEN program.

**<1** Group A is under-represented in a SEN program.

In order to use Disproportionality indices for planning purposes, thresholds will be determined through consultation with community partners and other stakeholders.

### Example

As an example of how these are calculated, we can look at students who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University based on their Special Education Needs status. The first step is to calculate the percentage of students who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University in each category (Gifted, SEN, excluding Gifted, without SEN). We can do this by taking the number of students who confirmed an offer of admission to a University and divide it by the total number of students in each category. For example, as shown in Table 2 and Table 3, a total of 428 students that confirmed an offer of admission within the Gifted category was divided by 520, which represents the total number of students in that category, resulting in the percentage of 82.3% shown in Table 3. We then do the same for the YRDSB average, which serves as the denominator for the disproportionality calculation. The percentages in Table 3 serve as the numerator for the disproportionality calculation.

**Table 2: Total Number of Students in each Category**

SEN Designation	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Gifted	428	520
SEN (excluding Gifted)	513	1,737
Without SEN	4991	7,509
YRDSB Average	5,932	9,766

**Table 3: Percentage of Students Who Confirmed an Offer of Admissions to an Ontario University**

SEN Designation	Confirmed Ontario University
Gifted	82.3%
SEN (excluding Gifted)	29.5%
Without SEN	66.5%
YRDSB Average	60.7%

Starting with students identified as Gifted, we took the percentage who confirmed an offer of admission (82.3%), and divided it by the YRDSB average (60.7%). The result, 1.36, shows that the number of students identified with a Gifted exceptionality who confirmed an offer is greater than the YRDSB average as it is greater than 1. We then repeated the process for the other two groups. From this, we can see that students identified with SEN (excluding Gifted) were underrepresented, while those identified without SEN are roughly represented at the same rate as the YRDSB average.

**Table 4: Disproportionality Index for Students Who Confirmed Offer of Admission to an Ontario University**

SEN Designation	Confirmed Ontario University
Gifted	1.36
SEN (excluding Gifted)	0.49
Without SEN	1.09

## A) Socio-demographic Variables

### Race

As seen in Table, the vast majority of students across Indigenous and racial identity groups transition to postsecondary studies. There is however, a wide range of university versus college pathways. Of those students who self-identified as East Asian, 76% confirmed university in Ontario while 8% confirmed college admission. In contrast, fewer than half of students who self-identified as Black and Latino/a/x confirmed university admission. The category of No Race Selection had fewer than half confirming university admission. Students who self-identified as Latino/a/x also had the highest proportion who did not apply to postsecondary studies (32%, more than twice the full Grade 12 result of those who did not apply to postsecondary studies).

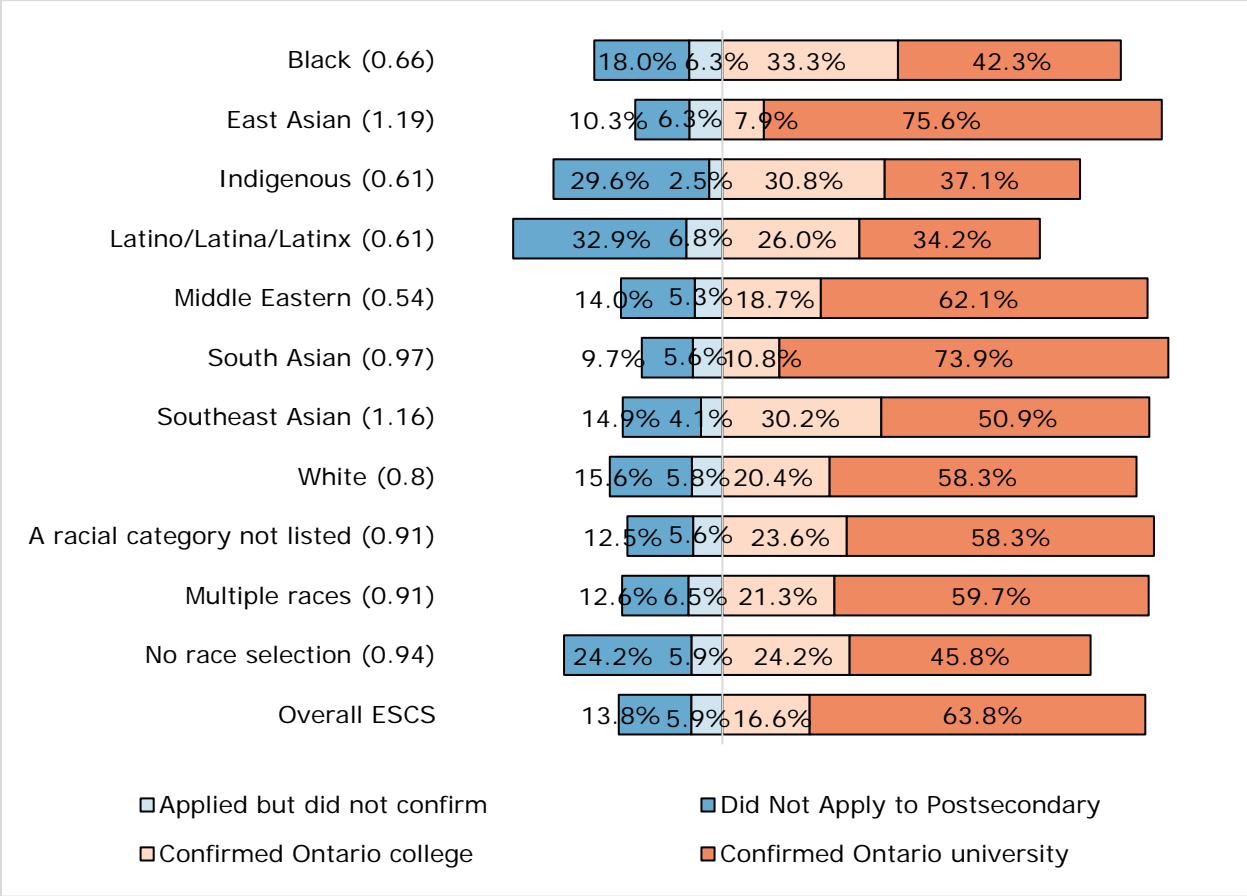
Students who self-identified as Indigenous were less likely, compared to those who were identified as non-Indigenous, to confirm university (37% compared to 61%), but were much more likely to confirm college (31% compared to 17%) and much more likely not to apply to postsecondary (30% compared to 16%).

**Table 5: Postsecondary Confirmation by Self-reported Indigenous Identity and Race**

Self-Identified Indigenous Identity*	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
<b>Indigenous</b>	29.6% (1,573)	2.5% (594)	30.8% (1,667)	37.1% (5,932)	9,766
<b>Black</b>	18.0%	6.3%	33.3%	42.3%	222
<b>East Asian</b>	10.3%	6.3%	7.9%	75.6%	2,260
<b>Latino/a/x</b>	32.9%	6.8%	26.0%	34.2%	73
<b>Middle Eastern</b>	14.0%	5.3%	18.7%	62.1%	514
<b>South Asian</b>	9.7%	5.6%	10.8%	73.9%	960
<b>Southeast Asian</b>	14.9%	4.1%	30.2%	50.9%	222
<b>White</b>	15.6%	5.8%	20.4%	58.3%	2,377
<b>A Racial Category Not Listed</b>	12.5%	5.6%	23.6%	58.3%	72

Self-Identified Indigenous Identity*	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
<b>Multiple Races</b>	12.6%	6.5%	21.3%	59.7%	635
<b>No Race Selection</b>	24.2%	5.9%	24.2%	45.8%	542
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,084</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>1,305</b>	<b>5,022</b>	<b>7,877</b>

**Figure 2: Postsecondary Confirmation by Self-Reported Indigenous Identity and Race**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University. Also, the YRDSB Totals represent the students with Indigenous and racial identity and Postsecondary pathways data in the cohort.

**Gender Identity**

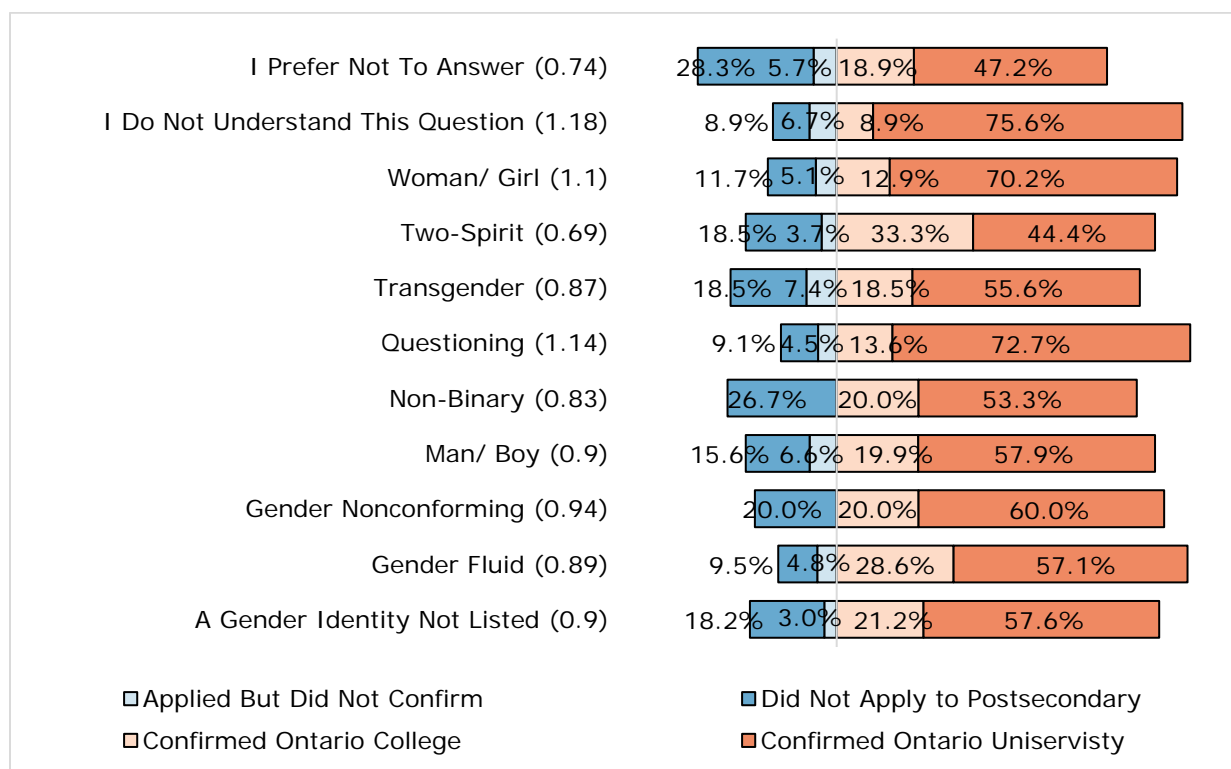
In Table, the groups of students with the highest rate of postsecondary access were those who self-identified as Questioning (86%), Gender Fluid (86%), those who said they did not understand the question (84%), and Woman/Girl (83%). While the majority of all gender categories transitioned to postsecondary studies, the lowest transition

rates were those who preferred not to answer (66%); those who self-identified as Non-Binary (73%); and those who self-identified as Transgender (74%).

**Table 6: Postsecondary Confirmation by Gender Identity**

Gender Identity	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied but Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
<b>A Gender Identity Not Listed</b>	18.2%	3.0%	21.2%	57.6%	33
<b>Gender Fluid</b>	9.5%	4.8%	28.6%	57.1%	21
<b>Gender Nonconforming</b>	20.0%	0.0%	20.0%	60.0%	15
<b>Man/ Boy</b>	15.6%	6.6%	19.9%	57.9%	3,621
<b>Non-Binary</b>	26.7%	0.0%	20.0%	53.3%	15
<b>Questioning</b>	9.1%	4.5%	13.6%	72.7%	22
<b>Transgender</b>	18.5%	7.4%	18.5%	55.6%	27
<b>Two-Spirit</b>	18.5%	3.7%	33.3%	44.4%	27
<b>Woman/ Girl</b>	11.7%	5.1%	12.9%	70.2%	3,793
<b>I Do Not Understand This Question</b>	8.9%	6.7%	8.9%	75.6%	45
<b>I Prefer Not to Answer</b>	28.3%	5.7%	18.9%	47.2%	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,055</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>1,262</b>	<b>4,909</b>	<b>7,672</b>

**Figure 3: Postsecondary Confirmation by Gender Identity**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University

### Sexual Orientation

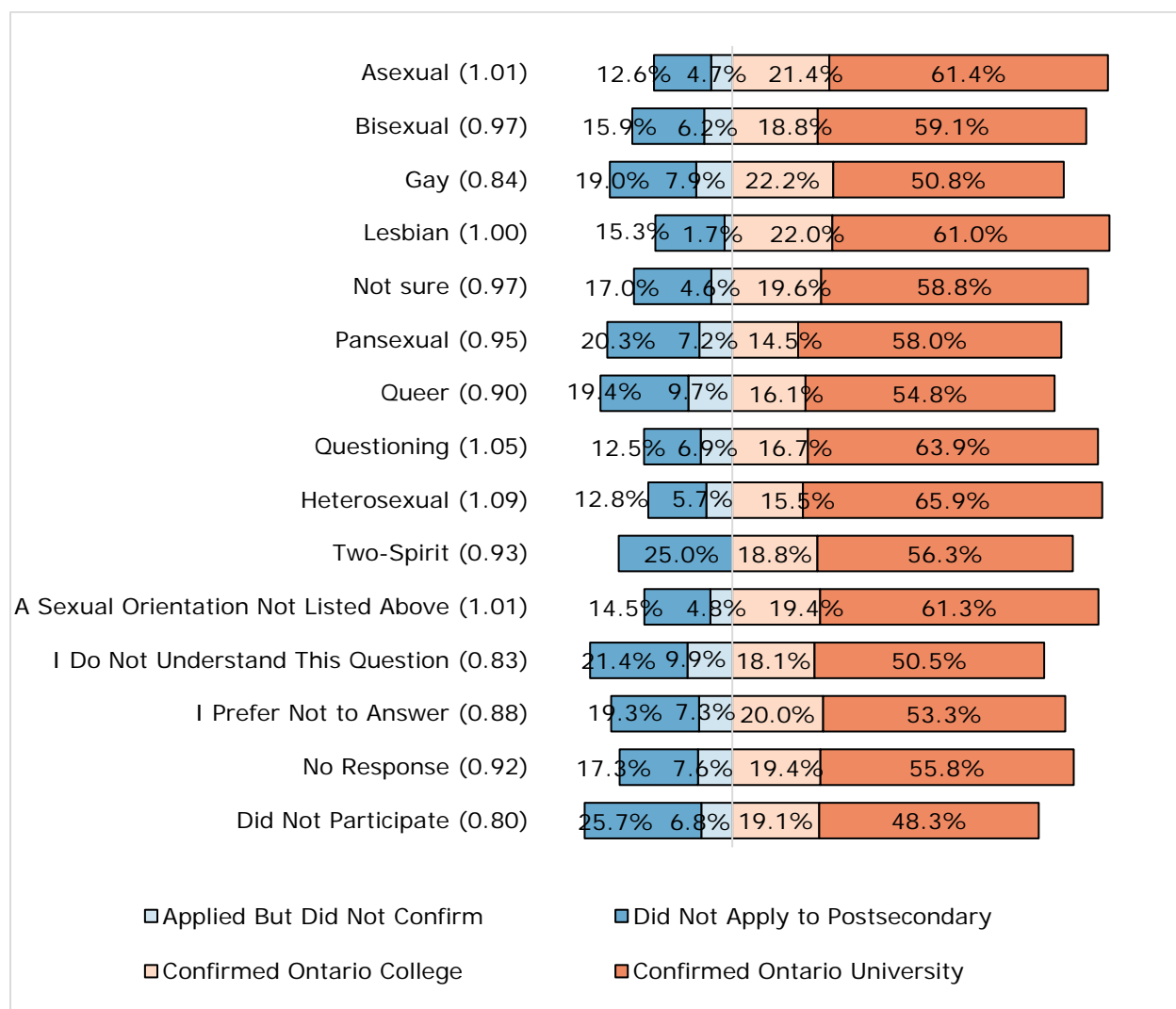
There was wide variation of postsecondary access according to responses to the Sexual Orientation question (Table 7). Those who did not participate in the question and those who self-identified as Two-Spirit had the largest proportion of students who did not apply to postsecondary studies (26% and 25%, respectively). Those who self-identified as Heterosexual and Questioning had the highest proportion of students confirming university admission (66%).

**Table 7: Postsecondary Confirmation by Sexual Orientation**

Sexual Orientation	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (N)
Asexual	12.6%	4.7%	21.4%	61.4%	365
Bisexual	15.9%	6.2%	18.8%	59.1%	372
Gay	19.0%	7.9%	22.2%	50.8%	63
Lesbian	15.3%	1.7%	22.0%	61.0%	59
Not sure	17.0%	4.6%	19.6%	58.8%	194
Pansexual	20.3%	7.2%	14.5%	58.0%	69

Sexual Orientation	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (N)
Queer	19.4%	9.7%	16.1%	54.8%	31
Questioning	12.5%	6.9%	16.7%	63.9%	72
Heterosexual	12.8%	5.7%	15.5%	65.9%	5,827
Two-Spirit	25.0%	0.0%	18.8%	56.3%	16
A Sexual Orientation Not Listed Above	14.5%	4.8%	19.4%	61.3%	62
I Do Not Understand This Question	21.4%	9.9%	18.1%	50.5%	182
I Prefer Not to Answer	19.3%	7.3%	20.0%	53.3%	300
No Response	17.3%	7.6%	19.4%	55.8%	278
Did Not Participate	25.7%	6.8%	19.1%	48.3%	1,876
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,932</b>	<b>9,766</b>

**Figure 4: Postsecondary Confirmation by Sexual Orientation**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University

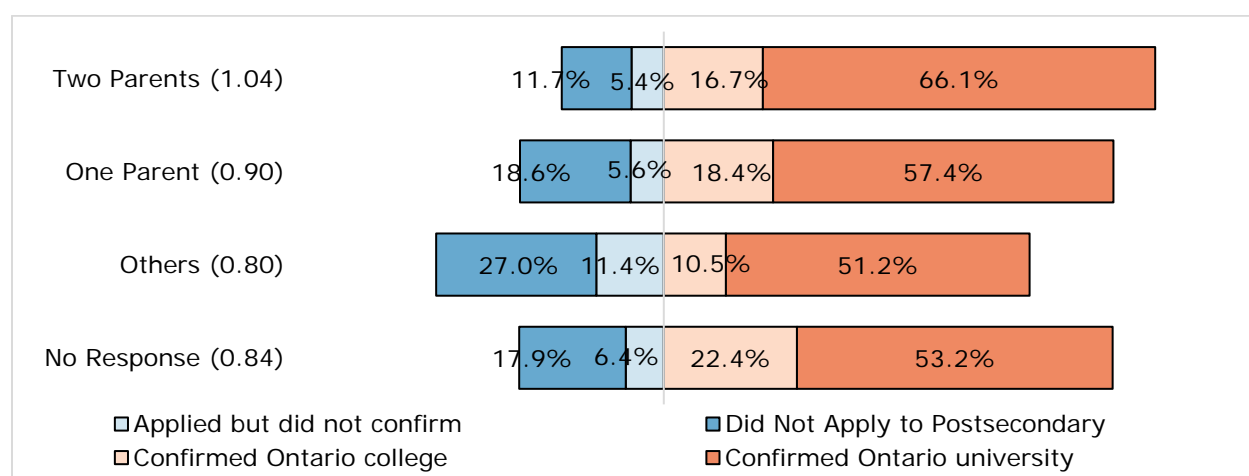
### Family Structure

Table 8 shows that students from two-parent households were more likely to go to an Ontario university (66%) compared to other family structures (51-57%). Those from other family structures, that is, other than one or two parent households, were much more likely not to apply to postsecondary (27%).

**Table 8: Postsecondary Confirmation by Family Structure**

Family Structure	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
No Response	17.9%	6.4%	22.4%	53.2%	156
Others	27.0%	11.4%	10.5%	51.2%	563
One Parent	18.6%	5.6%	18.4%	57.4%	999
Two Parents	11.7%	5.4%	16.7%	66.1%	6,172
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,091</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>1,308</b>	<b>5,025</b>	<b>7,890</b>

**Figure 5: Postsecondary Confirmation by Family Structure**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

### Born inside/outside Canada

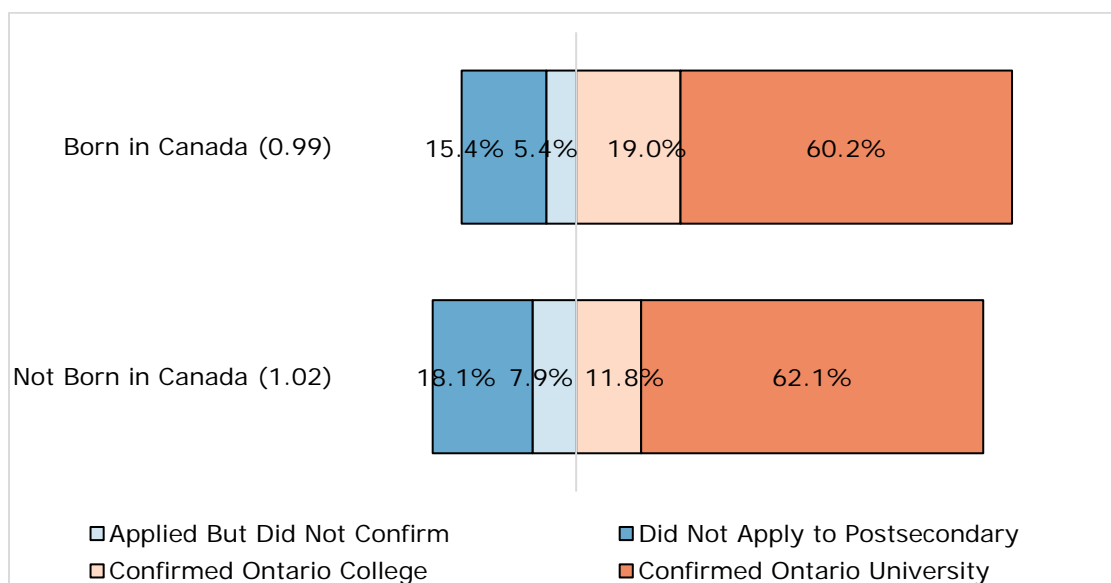
There was little difference between those born inside and outside Canada, in terms of students going to university, as seen in Table: 62% of those born outside Canada went to university, compared to 60% of those born in Canada. Those born in Canada were more likely to go to college (19% compared to 12% of those born outside Canada).

**Table 9: Postsecondary Confirmation by Place of Birth**

Place of Birth	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Born in Canada	15.4%	5.4%	19.0%	60.2%	7,191
Not Born in Canada	18.1%	7.9%	11.8%	62.1%	2,575
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,932</b>	<b>9,766</b>



**Figure 6: Postsecondary Confirmation by Place of Birth**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

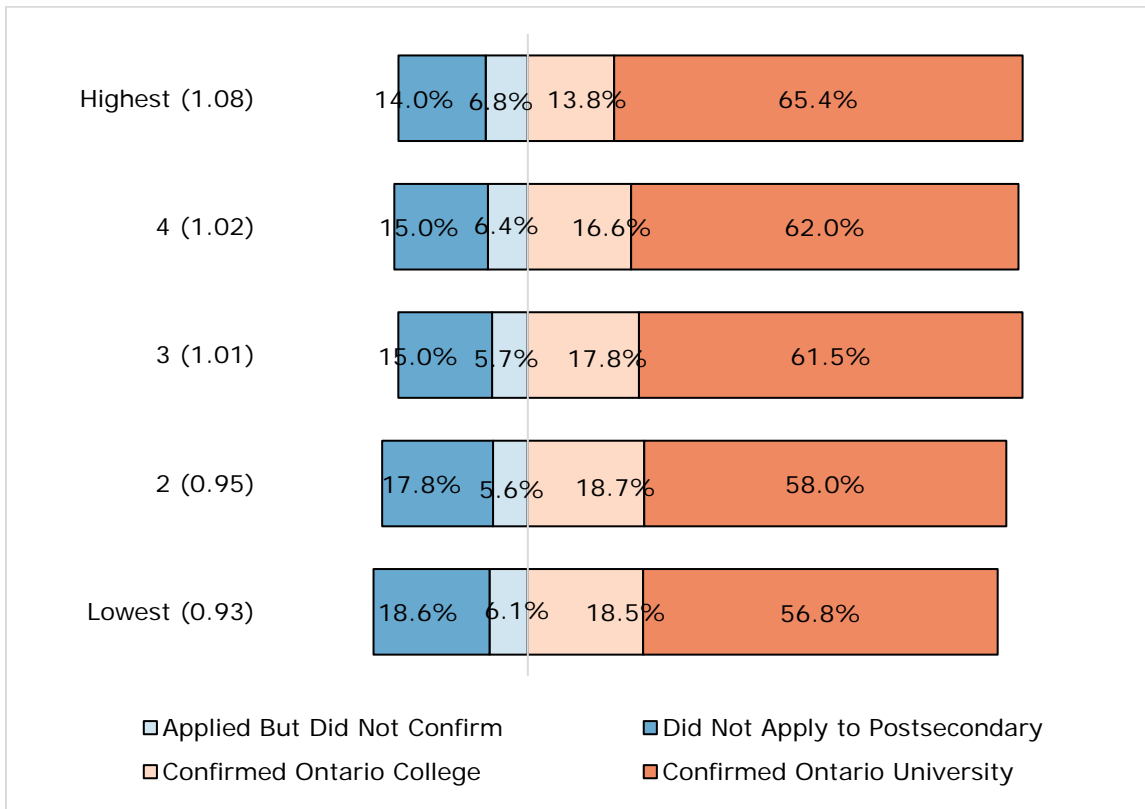
### Neighbourhood Income

Table 10 highlight differences of postsecondary placement according to the general income of the neighbourhood that students live in. Compared to students in the lowest income neighbourhood, those in the highest income neighbourhoods were more likely to confirm university (65% compared to 57%). Those in the lowest income neighbourhoods were more likely to confirm college (19% compared to 14% of those in high income neighbourhoods) and were also more likely to not apply to postsecondary (19% compared to 14% of those in high income neighbourhoods).

**Table 10: Postsecondary Confirmation by Quintiles of Income**

Quintiles of Income	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (N)
<b>Lowest</b>	18.6%	6.1%	18.5%	56.8%	1,937
<b>2</b>	17.8%	5.6%	18.7%	58.0%	1,940
<b>3</b>	15.0%	5.7%	17.8%	61.5%	1,938
<b>4</b>	15.0%	6.4%	16.6%	62.0%	1,939
<b>Highest</b>	14.0%	6.8%	13.8%	65.4%	1,939
<b>Total</b>	1,558	593	1,654	5,888	9,693

**Figure 7: Postsecondary Confirmation by Quintiles of Income**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

## B) Achievement Variables

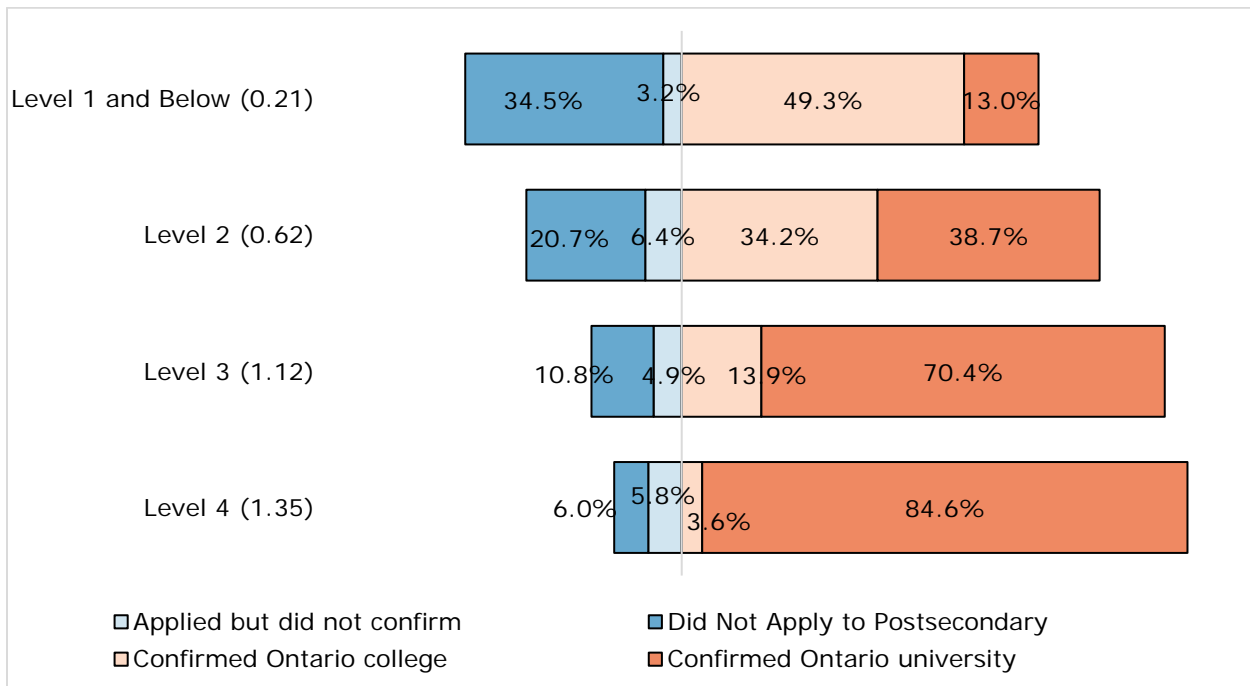
### Grade 6 EQAO Mathematics

There is a clear association of Grade 6 EQAO Mathematics with postsecondary confirmations six or seven years later. As seen in Table, the majority of students from all Levels in Grade 6 EQAO later transitioned to postsecondary institutions, but the key difference between levels was in university versus college placement. The majority of students who achieved Levels 3 and 4 in Grade 6, later attended university. The majority of students at Levels 2 and below did not.

**Table 11: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 6 EQAO Mathematics Achievement**

Achievement Level	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Level 1 and Below	34.5%	3.2%	49.3%	13.0%	339
Level 2	20.7%	6.4%	34.2%	38.7%	1417
Level 3	10.8%	4.9%	13.9%	70.4%	3236
Level 4	6.0%	5.8%	3.6%	84.6%	1478
<b>Total</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>1154</b>	<b>4121</b>	<b>6470</b>

**Figure 8: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 6 EQAO Mathematics Achievement**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

### Grade 8 ERC Mathematics

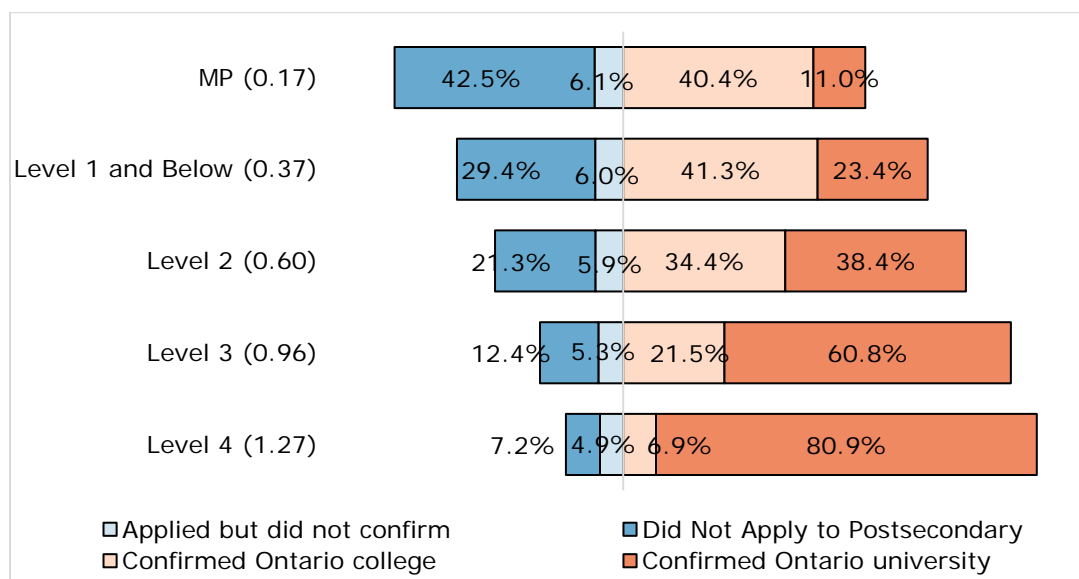
Table 12 shows that Grade 8 ERC Mathematics shows a similar future association to postsecondary pathways as Grade 6 EQAO Mathematics. The key differentiator of Grade 8 achievement shows whether students went to university. Most students below Level 3 in Grade 8 Mathematics did not, while most at Level 3 (61%) and Level 4 (81%) in Grade 8 Mathematics went to university.

**Table 12: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 8 ERC Mathematics**

Achievement Level	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
MP	42.5%	6.1%	40.4%	11.0%	527
Level 1 and Below	29.4%	6.0%	41.3%	23.4%	218
Level 2	21.3%	5.9%	34.4%	38.4%	709
Level 3	12.4%	5.3%	21.5%	60.8%	2,026
Level 4	7.2%	4.9%	6.9%	80.9%	3,497
<b>Total</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>1,226</b>	<b>4,442</b>	<b>6,977</b>

Note: MP is an acronym used for modified programs.

**Figure 9: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 8 ERC Mathematics**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

### Grade 8 ERC Reading and Writing

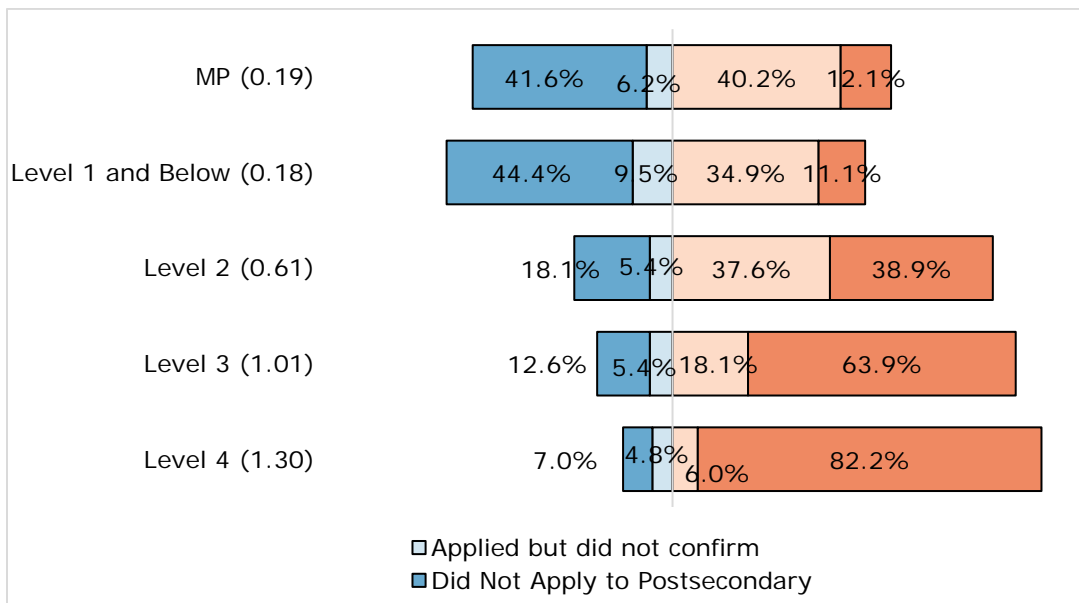
Table 13 and Table 14 show the relationship of Grade 8 Reading and Writing to postsecondary confirmations. Patterns are very similar to Grade 6 EQAO and Grade 8 ERC Mathematics—making it clear that the association is one of early achievement patterns in general, rather than an association attributable to one subject (e.g. numeracy and literacy).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Indeed, a composite variable of Grade 9 credit accumulation and multiple subject completion patterns had the strongest association of TDSB students to graduation from the University of Toronto (Brown, Davies and

**Table 13: Grade 8 Reading by Postsecondary Application Status**

Achievement Level	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
<b>MP</b>	41.6%	6.2%	40.2%	12.1%	580
<b>Level 1 and Below</b>	44.4%	9.5%	34.9%	11.1%	63
<b>Level 2</b>	18.1%	5.4%	37.6%	38.9%	720
<b>Level 3</b>	12.6%	5.4%	18.1%	63.9%	3,084
<b>Level 4</b>	7.0%	4.8%	6.0%	82.2%	2,623
<b>Total</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>1,242</b>	<b>4,486</b>	<b>7,074</b>

**Figure 10: Grade 8 Reading by Postsecondary Application Status**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

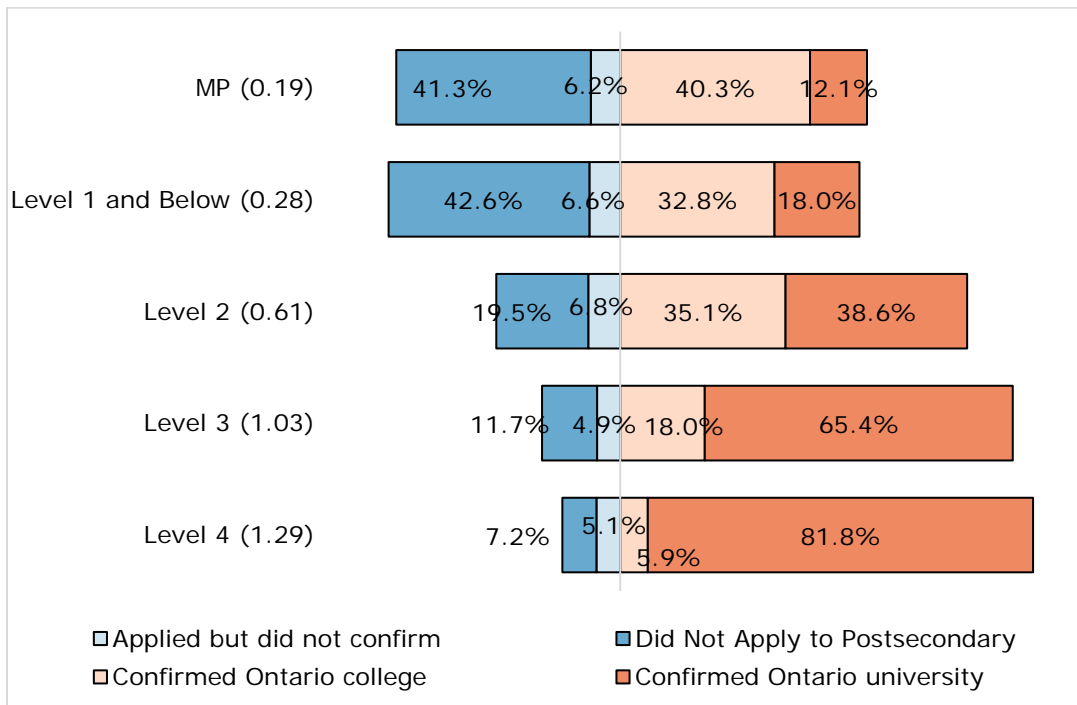
**Table 14: Grade 8 Writing by Postsecondary Application Status**

Achievement Level	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
<b>MP</b>	41.3%	6.2%	40.3%	12.1%	578
<b>Level 1 and Below</b>	42.6%	6.6%	32.8%	18.0%	61
<b>Level 2</b>	19.5%	6.8%	35.1%	38.6%	783

Chakraborty, 2019), and a more recent study has found an association of ERC subjects such as Oral and Visual Communications to university graduation (Brown, in progress).

Achievement Level	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Level 3	11.7%	4.9%	18.0%	65.4%	3,155
Level 4	7.2%	5.1%	5.9%	81.8%	2,488
<b>Total</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>1,242</b>	<b>4,487</b>	<b>7,073</b>

**Figure 11: Grade 8 Writing by Postsecondary Application Status**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

### Grade 9 EQAO Mathematics- Academic and Applied

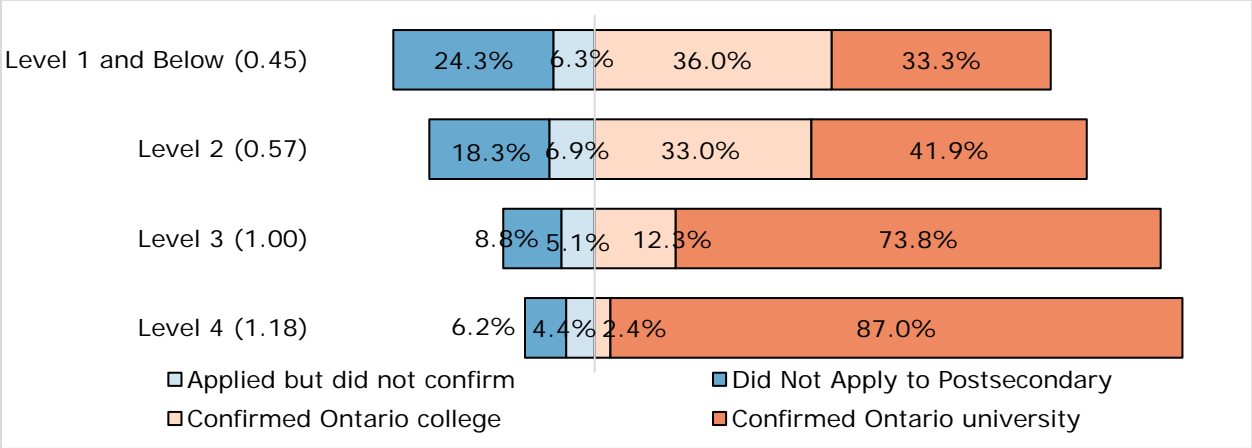
In Table 15 there appears to be a strong relationship of Grade 9 EQAO Academic to achievement-- since most of those at Levels 3 and 4 confirmed university admissions, while most of those at Level 2 and below did not. The vast majority of Academic students (92%) were at Levels 3 and 4, while 8% were at Levels 2 and below.

**Table 15: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 9 EQAO Academic Math Results**

Achievement Level	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Level 1 and Below	24.3%	6.3%	36.0%	33.3%	111
Level 2	18.3%	6.9%	33.0%	41.9%	449

Achievement Level	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Level 3	8.8%	5.1%	12.3%	73.8%	4,672
Level 4	6.2%	4.4%	2.4%	87.0%	1,377
<b>Total</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>335</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>4,869</b>	<b>6,609</b>

Figure 12: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 9 EQAO Academic Math Results



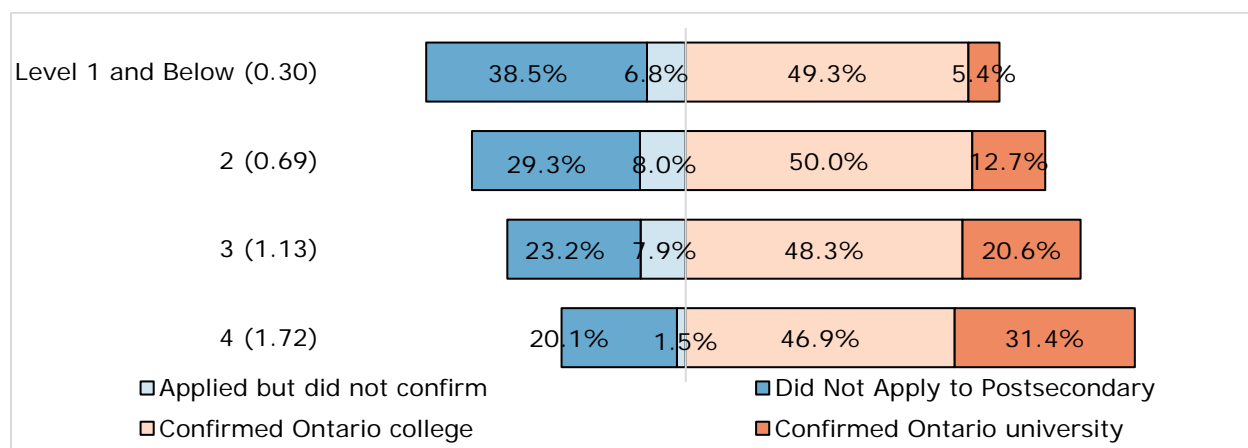
Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

One sees a very different picture with Grade 9 EQAO Applied (Table). Regardless of achievement level, most Grade 9 students did not transition to university, while around half of students at Levels 1-4 confirmed college admission (53% of those at Level 1, 45% of those at Level 4). More of Applied students (59%) were at Levels 3 and 4, while 41% were at Levels 2 and below.

Table 16: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 9 EQAO Applied Math Results

Achievement Level	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Level 1 and Below	38.5%	6.8%	49.3%	5.4%	148
Level 2	29.3%	8.0%	50.0%	12.7%	338
Level 3	23.2%	7.9%	48.3%	20.6%	495
Level 4	20.1%	1.5%	46.9%	31.4%	194
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>1,175</b>

**Figure 13: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 9 EQAO Applied Math Results**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

### Grade 10 OSSLT

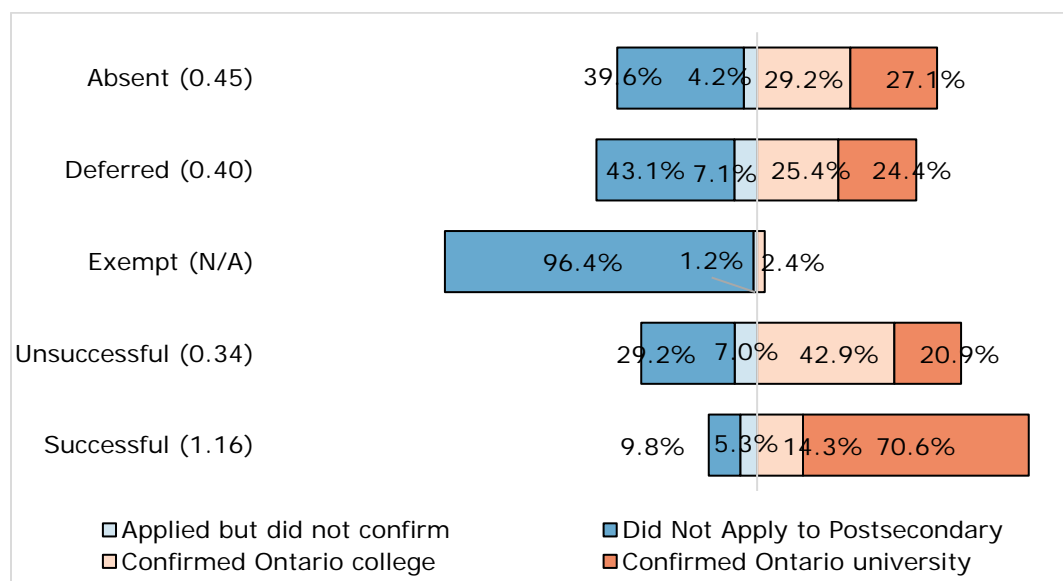
As seen in Table 17, the vast majority of first-time eligible students who were successful at the first administration of the OSSLT transitioned to university (71%; 14% transitioned to college). Students who were unsuccessful, absent or deferred were less likely to go to university. Those absent or deferred were much more likely not to apply to postsecondary at all (40% of those who were absent, 45% of those who were deferred).

**Table 17: Postsecondary Confirmation by First-Time Eligible OSSLT Result**

OSSLT Status	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
<b>Successful</b>	9.8%	5.3%	14.3%	70.6%	7,158
<b>Unsuccessful</b>	29.2%	7.0%	42.9%	20.9%	886
<b>Absent</b>	39.6%	4.2%	29.2%	27.1%	48
<b>Deferred</b>	43.1%	7.1%	25.4%	24.4%	197
<b>Exempt</b>	96.4%	1.2%	2.4%	0.0%	84
<b>No Data</b>	30.5%	9.9%	13.9%	45.7%	1,393
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,932</b>	<b>9,766</b>



**Figure 14: Postsecondary Confirmation by FTE OSSLT Result**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

## C) Variables Related to School and School Structure

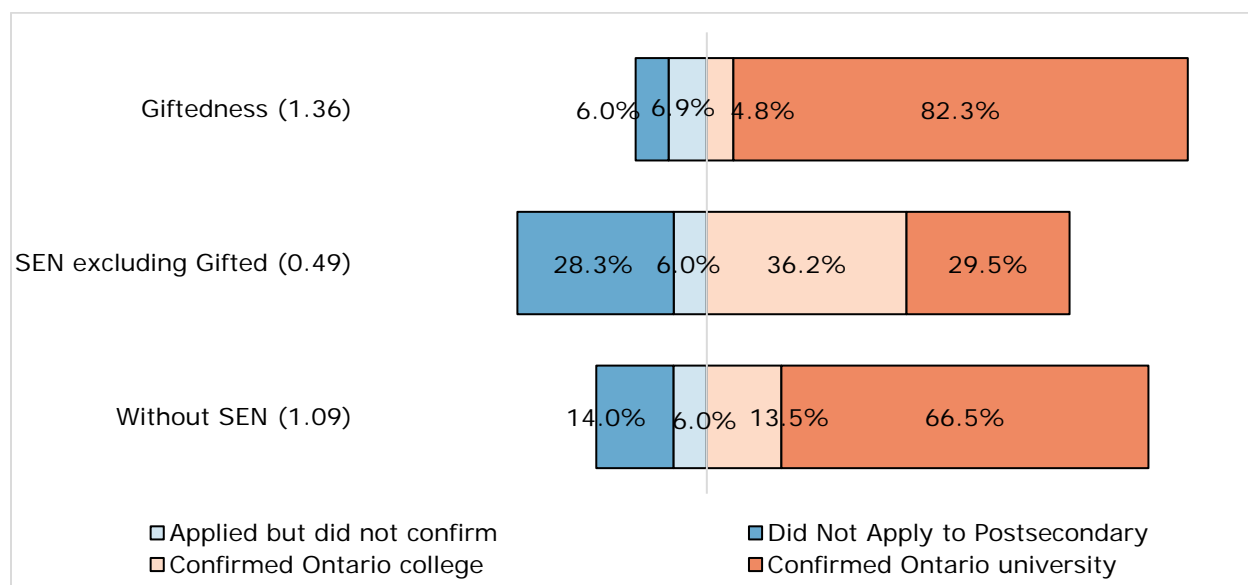
### Special Education Needs

Table 18 shows that students identified with Special Education Needs (not including those with a Gifted exceptionality) were more likely to go to college than university (36% transitions to college, compared to 30% who transitioned to university). In contrast, 66% of those students identified without SEN, and 82% of those students identified with a Gifted exceptionality, transitioned to university.

**Table 18: Postsecondary Confirmation by Special Education Needs Status**

SEN Designation	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
<b>Gifted</b>	6.0%	6.9%	4.8%	82.3%	520
<b>SEN excluding Gifted</b>	28.3%	6.0%	36.2%	29.5%	1,737
<b>Without SEN</b>	14.0%	6.0%	13.5%	66.5%	7,509
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,932</b>	<b>9,766</b>

**Figure 15: Postsecondary Confirmation by Special Education Needs Status**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

### Exceptionality

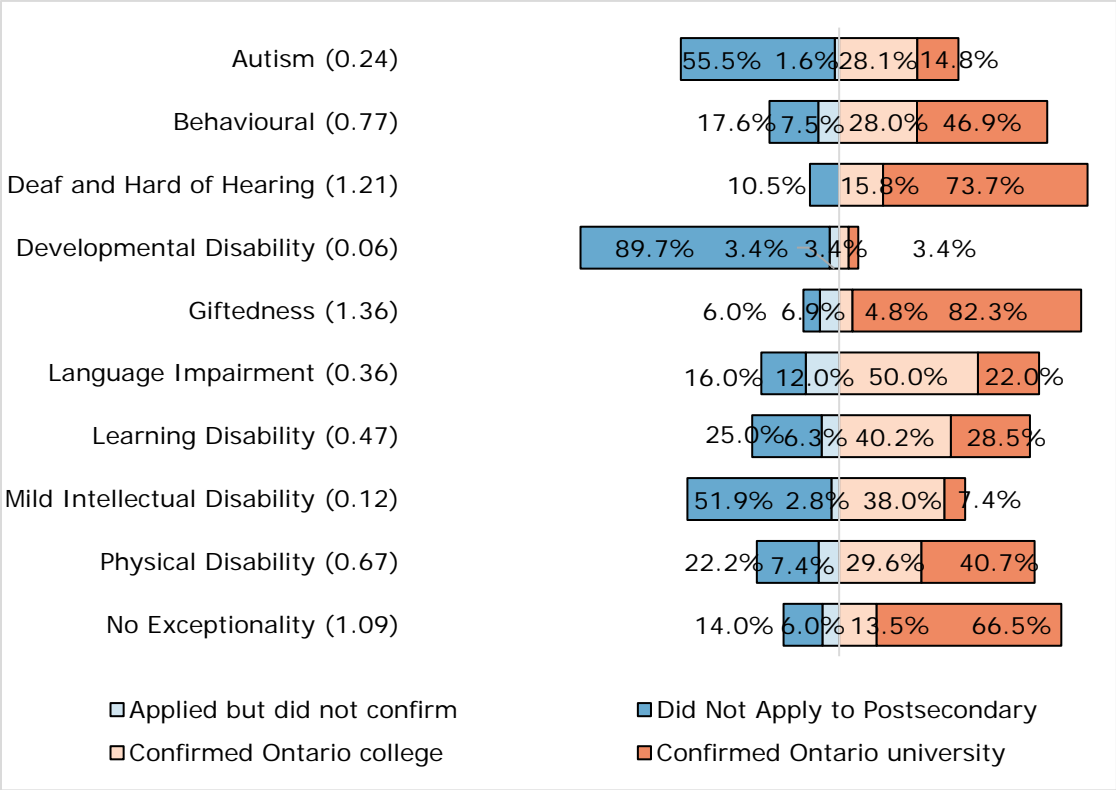
Students identified with Autism, Behavioral, Developmental Disability, Language Impairment, Learning Disability, Mild Intellectual Disability, and Physical Disability were unlikely to make the direct transition to university. Indeed, the majority of those identified with Autism, Developmental Disability, and Mild Intellectual Disability, did not apply to postsecondary. For more detail, see Table 19.

**Table 19: Postsecondary Confirmation by Exceptionality**

Exceptionality	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Autism	55.5%	1.6%	28.1%	14.8%	128
Behavioural	17.6%	7.5%	28.0%	46.9%	307
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	10.5%	0.0%	15.8%	73.7%	19
Developmental Disability	89.7%	3.4%	3.4%	3.4%	29
Gifted	6.0%	6.9%	4.8%	82.3%	520
Language Impairment	16.0%	12.0%	50.0%	22.0%	50
Learning Disability	25.0%	6.3%	40.2%	28.5%	1,064
Mild Intellectual Disability	51.9%	2.8%	38.0%	7.4%	108

Exceptionality	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Physical Disability	22.2%	7.4%	29.6%	40.7%	27
No Exceptionality	14.0%	6.0%	13.5%	66.5%	7,509
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,570</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,930</b>	<b>9,764</b>

**Figure 16: Postsecondary Confirmation by Exceptionality**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

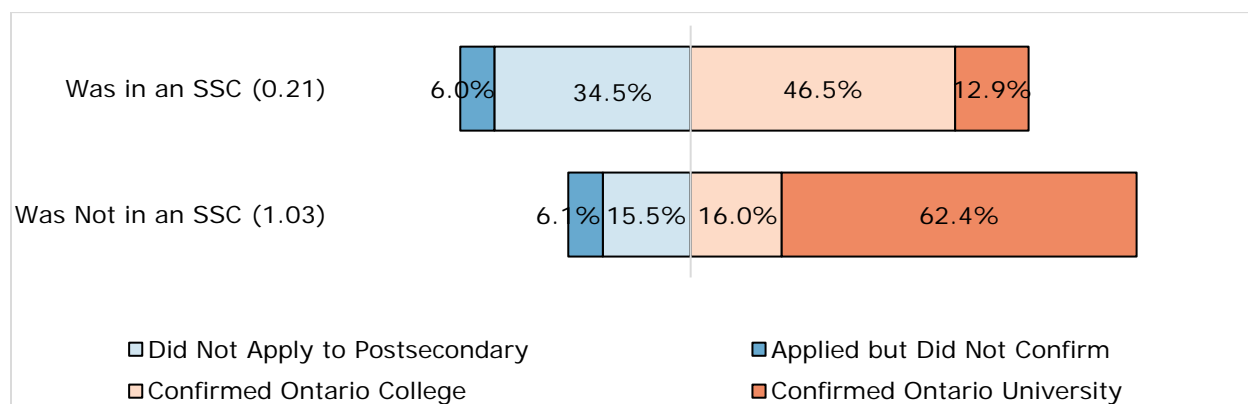
**Student Support Centre**

This section looks at the Postsecondary destinations of students who were in the SSC program during 8<sup>th</sup> grade. From the table below, we can see that most students did go on to Postsecondary education with 46.5% confirming an offer of College admission, and 12.9% confirming University admission. Those who applied but did not confirm an offer is significantly higher among those in the SSC program, 34.5% compared to just 15.5% for those not in an SSC.

**Table 20: Postsecondary Confirmation by SSC Placement**

SSC Placement	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Was in an SSC	34.5%	6.0%	46.5%	12.9%	333
Was Not in an SSC	15.5%	6.1%	16.0%	62.4%	9,433
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,932</b>	<b>9,766</b>

**Figure 17: Postsecondary Confirmation by SSC Placement**



The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

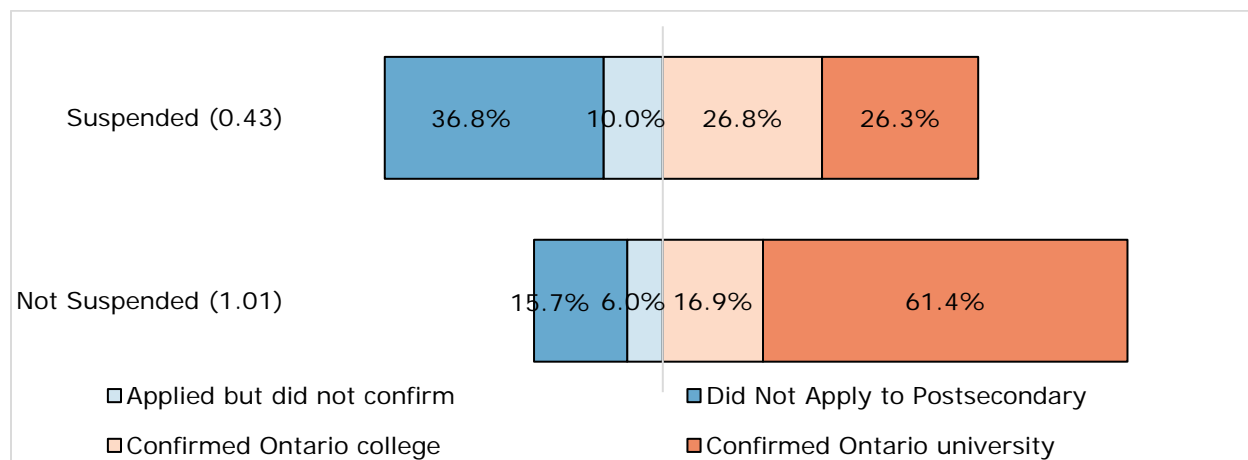
## Suspensions

Students suspended over the 2018-19 school year had one of the largest university-pathway gaps, as seen in Table 21—around a quarter (26%) of suspended students transitioned to university, compared to almost two thirds (61%) of those not suspended that year.

**Table 21: Postsecondary Confirmation by Suspension**

Suspension Status	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Not Suspended	15.7%	6.0%	16.9%	61.4%	9,576
Suspended	36.8%	10.0%	26.8%	26.3%	190
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,932</b>	<b>9,766</b>

**Figure 18: Postsecondary Confirmation by Suspension**



**Grade 9 Program of Study**

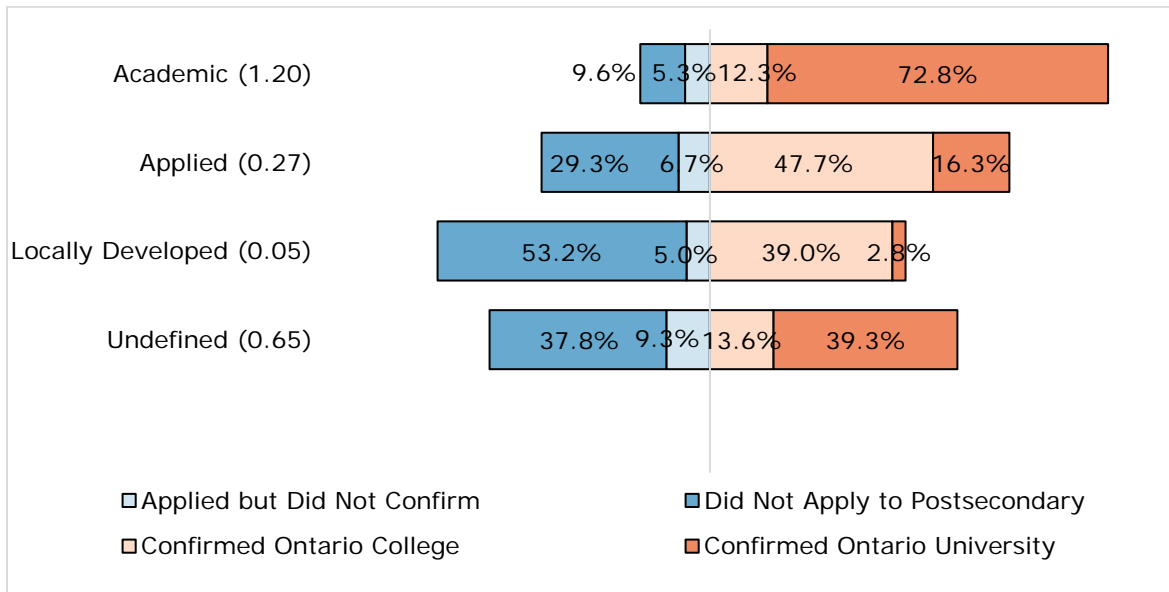
Table 22 makes clear that the vast majority (85%) of students taking a majority of Academic courses in Grade 9 confirmed an offer of admission from an Ontario postsecondary institution- around three quarters of them (73%) confirming university. Of students taking Applied courses, slightly under two thirds (64%) confirmed postsecondary, mostly confirming an Ontario college. The majority of students taking Locally-Developed courses did not transition into postsecondary studies.

**Table 22: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 9 Program of Study**

Program of Study	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
<b>Academic</b>	9.6%	5.3%	12.3%	72.8%	6,969
<b>Applied</b>	29.3%	6.7%	47.7%	16.3%	1,154
<b>Locally Developed</b>	53.2%	5.0%	39.0%	2.8%	141
<b>Undefined</b>	37.8%	9.3%	13.6%	39.3%	1,059
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,485</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>1,608</b>	<b>5,678</b>	<b>9,323</b>

Note: Students with an “Undefined” program of study are those for which no clear Grade 9-10 Program of Study could be identified.

**Figure 19: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 9 Program of Study**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

## Taking Grade 12 'U' Courses

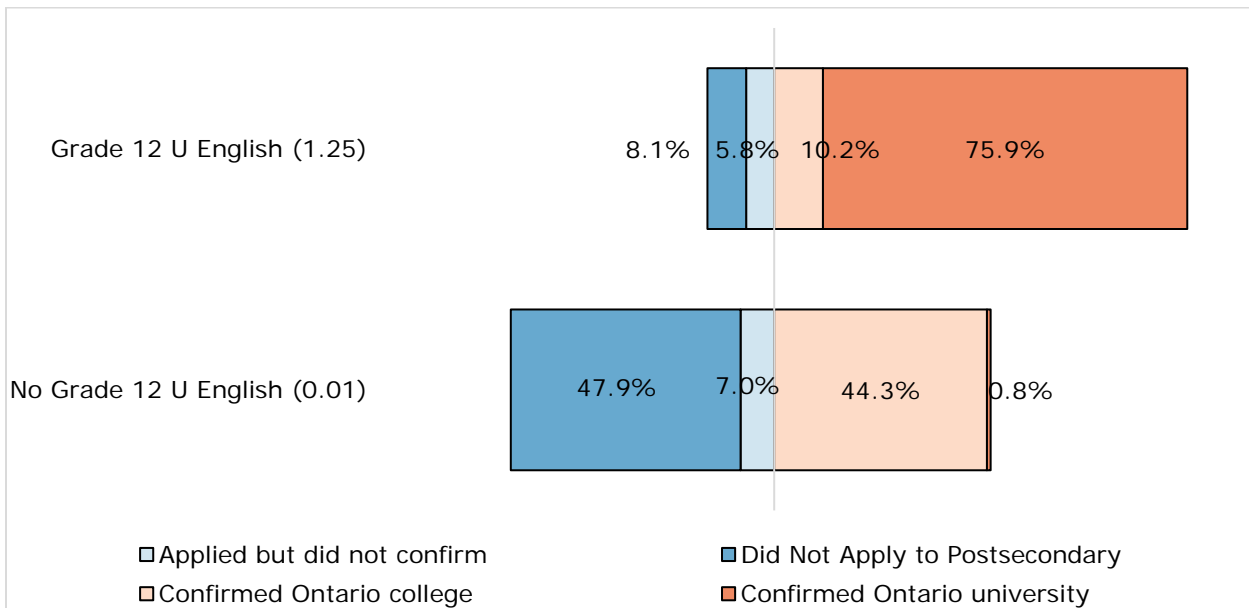
Tables 19-20 show the very strong relationship of postsecondary entry of students who have completed a Grade 12 'U' course in English, Mathematics and Science by the end of 2018-19:

- 86% of students completing an English Grade 12 U course confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario postsecondary (76% to university);
- 87% of students completing a Mathematics Grade 12 U course confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario postsecondary (80% to university);
- 88% of students completing a Science Grade 12 U course confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario postsecondary (82% to university).

**Table 23: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 12 English Course Taken**

Grade 12 English Course	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Grade 12 U English	8.1%	5.8%	10.2%	75.9%	7,795
No Grade 12 U English	47.9%	7.0%	44.3%	0.8%	1,971
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,932</b>	<b>9,766</b>

**Figure 20: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 12 English Course Taken**

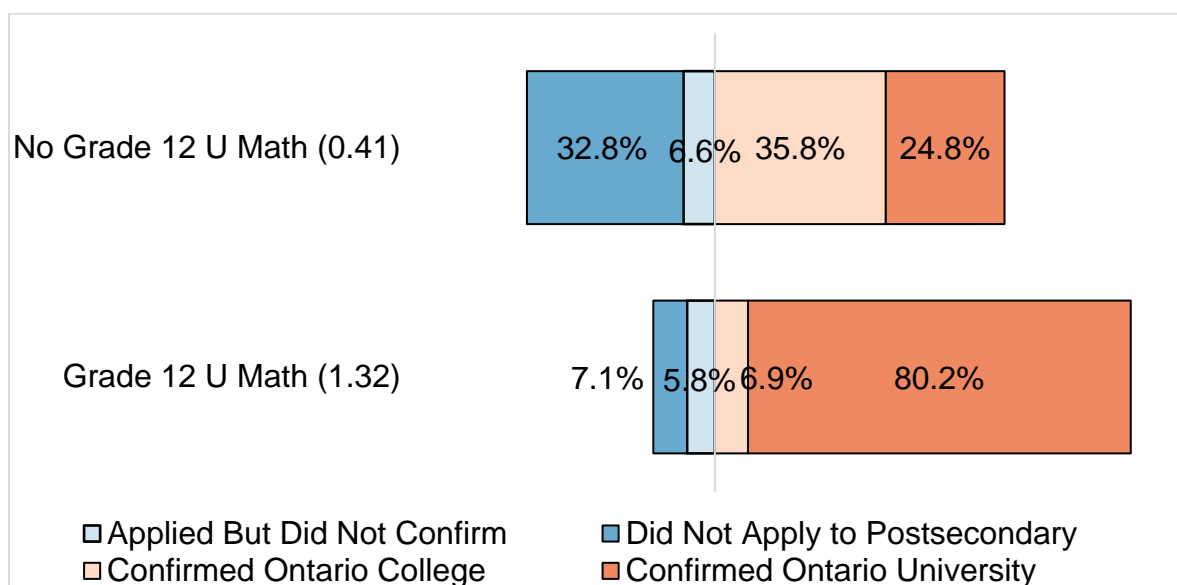


Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

**Table 24: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 12 Math Course Taken**

Grade 12 Math Course	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Grade 12 U Math	7.1%	5.8%	6.9%	80.2%	6,339
No Grade 12 U Math	32.8%	6.6%	35.8%	24.8%	3,427
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,932</b>	<b>9,766</b>

**Figure 21: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 12 Math Course Taken**



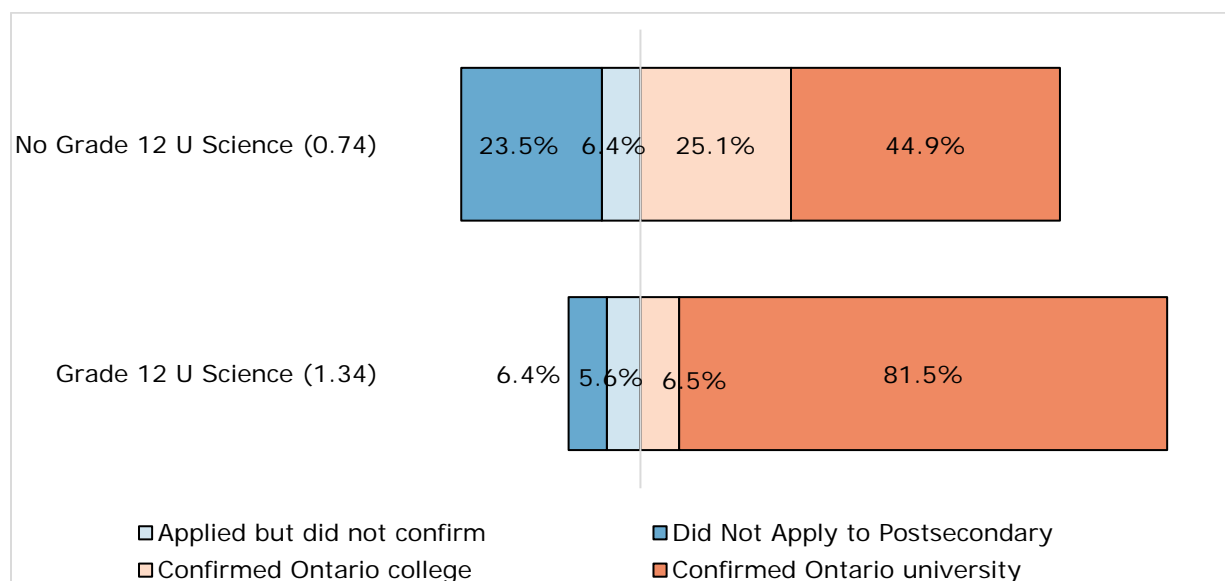
Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

**Table 25: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 12 Science Course Taken**

Grade 12 Science Course	Did Not Apply to Postsecondary	Applied But Did Not Confirm	Confirmed Ontario College	Confirmed Ontario University	Total (n)
Grade 12 U Science	6.4%	5.6%	6.5%	81.5%	4,221
No Grade 12 U Science	23.5%	6.4%	25.1%	44.9%	5,545
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,573</b>	<b>594</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>5,932</b>	<b>9,766</b>



**Figure 22: Postsecondary Confirmation by Grade 12 Science Course Taken**



Note: The numbers in brackets are the disproportionality value for those who confirmed an offer of admission to an Ontario University.

## Limitations

One limitation of this report relates to methodology and its assumptions about knowledge, which has shaped how the data was “gathered, analyzed and disseminated.” (Peterson et al., 2016, p. 22). As Peterson et al., (2016) explain, “[i]nherent within research methodologies are assumptions about knowledge creation that shape how data are gathered and analyzed and how findings are disseminated” (p. 22). Findings in this report are based solely on quantitative analyses, which only answer questions about “what”, “who”, or “how many” and therefore, cannot by themselves, answer questions about “why” or “how”. As a result, these alternative, yet crucial, perspectives or truths, are often missing in quantitative research. We also recognize that findings have been reported in a way that maintains the idea of neutrality so commonly used as a validity and reliability metric in quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Historically, quantitative analyses are often seen as “truths” because of the false assumption that quantitative researchers remain “neutral” when working with numbers.

Qualitative research methods, on the other hand, allow for a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of the marginalized groups that the numbers claim to represent. In fact, qualitative research does not claim to represent or generalize to particular groups of individuals or provide an objective “truth”. Rather, qualitative research claims to provide a “rendition of how life is perceived” (Bold, 2012, p. 17), often inviting participants as co-researchers to retell stories as faithfully as possible. This collaboration, coupled with reflexivity - a technique used by many qualitative researchers that questions one’s own taken for granted assumptions about lived experiences and makes transparent multiple interpretations, or “truths”, of the lives

explored - offers readers a more balanced representation of lived experience(s) (Bold, 2012).

For this reason, in the next series of themed reports, the YRDSB plans to use a mixed methods study design with intersectionality analyses and frameworks in order to further understand the perceptions and experiences of marginalized groups. This approach, in addition to reflexivity, will help illuminate that education systems are not, and cannot be conceptualized as, unbiased or neutral enterprises (Parkay et al., 2012). Exploring these themed reports through a reflexive dialogue can also provide readers the room to make their own meanings “with the lived stories that they know . . . and the stories that are common in many ways to others” (Bold, 2012, p. 145). It will contextualize information about students’ experiences and their socio-cultural environment to enrich findings (Goswami & Rutherford, 2009).

Since the objective of these initial and ongoing themed reports is to promote critical dialogue that leads to positive social change for marginalized and underserved students, offering multiple perspectives through reflexivity in the future reports is a crucial step toward this goal. For the current themed reports, however, an in-depth reflexive dialogue in the reporting structure was not feasible due to the scope of the research. Instead, prompts that guide readers towards using an anti-oppression perspective when reviewing the report can be found within the introduction section. These prompts may be used to promote critical dialogue amongst education stakeholders. In the future, a closer focus will be needed on how oppressive ideologies, that may be present in the educational environment, impact the educational opportunities of racialized and marginalized students.

Other considerations pertain to the categories used to conceptualize social identities. The identity categories used in this report are based on the responses to questions in the ESCS and data available from YRDSB’s Student Information System. Some limitations pertaining to the use of this data are:

- Findings indicate that participants who did not provide identity information for certain categories or whose information could not be linked to the Students Information System at times reported lower rates of access to Postsecondary studies compared to their peers; however, we do not know the identity groups to which they belong. This means that inequities for some groups may actually be higher than reported.
- The social identity categories used in this analysis may not align with how individual students describe their identities. For instance, the sexual orientation and gender identity questions were single-selection, meaning that students could only select one gender identity category. As a result, students whose gender identity is best described by more than one category were unable to fully identify their gender identity.

The use of culturally-biased standardized tests as a metric for student achievement and diagnostic purposes is another consideration for this study as the contents of standardized assessments, which more often than not are designed to favour students of European-heritage in urban settings, cannot reflect concepts, perspectives, and

values that are familiar to non-European students (Dench et al., 2011; Eriks-Brophy, 2014; Noggle, 2014, Peltier, 2011; Peterson et al., 2016). In the future, YRDSB hopes to use more culturally relevant and responsive assessment tools (e.g., Eisazadeh et al., 2021; Peterson et al., 2021, 2018), that draw on students' *funds of knowledge* (Hedges et al., 2011; Moll et al., 1992) and, in turn, affirm their individual identities.

Lastly, although we engaged in a comprehensive community consultation in the development of this report, we hold the belief that there is always room for growth to better partner with communities, particularly in co-constructing the themed reports. In efforts to best collaborate and hear the voices of community members, we welcome any feedback on this report or any suggestions for next steps regarding the current and ongoing reporting structures. If desired, you may contact [research.services@yrdsb.ca](mailto:research.services@yrdsb.ca) with your feedback.

## Explanation of Terms

**Anti-Oppression Framework:** An approach that places equity and human rights at the forefront of actions by intentionally identifying, addressing and changing the values, structures, policies, attitudes and practices that result in discrimination against individuals or groups. The framework promotes an understanding of how power, privilege and oppression operate within institutions

**Anti-Racism Data Standards:** Anti-Racism data standard were established by the Government of Ontario to help identify and monitor systemic racism and racial disparities within the public sector in order to create an inclusive and equitable society for all Ontarians. The standards establish consistent, effective practices for producing reliable information to support evidence-based decision-making and public accountability to help eliminate systemic racism and promote racial equity. This term is a common way of referencing the *Data standards for the identification and monitoring of systemic racism* (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Asexual:** Asexual refers to a person who does not experience sexual attraction.

**Bisexual:** Bisexual refers to a person who experiences attraction to both male-identified and female-identified people.

**Data:** “Data is defined as facts, figures, and statistics objectively measured according to a standard or scale, such as frequency, volumes or occurrences. Data does not include information like reports or manuals.” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Disability:** Disability is a term that covers a broad range and degree of conditions, some visible and others not (e.g., physical, mental, and learning disabilities; hearing or vision disabilities; epilepsy; environmental sensitivities). A disability may be present from birth, may be caused by an accident, or may develop over time. A disability may be temporary, sporadic or permanent.

**Disaggregated Data:** “Disaggregated data is broken down into component parts or smaller units of data for statistical analysis. In the context of race-based data, this means breaking down the composite (aggregate) “racialized” category into its component parts such as Black, South Asian, East/Southeast Asian, Latino/a/x, Middle Eastern, White, etc.” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Disparity:** Disparity refers to, “Unequal outcomes in a comparison of one ... group to another ... group” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Disparity Index:** This numerical index is a measure of the relative difference between the outcome of one group compared to the outcome of another. In this report, outcomes for each group are compared to the combined outcomes of all students who are not in that group. The calculation of disparity and disproportionality indices is a requirement of the Antiracism Data Standards (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Disproportionality:** Disproportionality refers to “the over-representation or under-representation of an [identity] group in a particular program or system, compared with their representation in the general population” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**EIAC:** EIAC is an acronym that refers to YRDSB’s Equity and Inclusivity Advisory Committee.

**EQAO:** EQAO is an acronym that refers to Education Quality and Accountability Office.

**Equity:** Equity refers to “the systemic fair treatment of all people. It results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. It contrasts with formal equality where people are treated the same without regard for ... differences” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Exceptionality:** The Education Act sets out five categories of exceptionalities in the definition of an exceptional pupil including: behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical, and multiple. These broad categories are designed to address the wide range of conditions that will affect a student’s learning needs. (Government of Ontario, 2017, p. 63).

**Gay:** Gay refers to a person who experiences attraction to people of the same sex and / or gender. Gay can include both male-identified individuals and female-identified individuals, or refer to male-identified individuals only.

**Gender Expression:** “Gender expression is how a person publicly expresses or presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person’s chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender. Others perceive a person’s gender through these attributes” (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2014, p. 3).

**Gender Fluid:** Gender fluid refers to a person whose gender identity or expression changes or shifts along the gender spectrum.

**Gender Identity:** Gender identity is a person’s internal and deeply felt sense of being a man, a woman, both, neither, or having another identity on the gender spectrum (i.e., gender fluid, gender nonconforming, non-binary, questioning, transgender, two spirit). A person’s gender identity may be different from the sex assigned at birth (i.e., female or male).

**Gender Nonconforming:** Gender nonconforming refers to a person not being in line with the cultural associations made in a given society about a person’s sex assigned at birth.

**Gifted:** The Ministry of Education defines gifted as an unusually advanced degree of general intellectual ability that requires differentiated learning experiences of a depth and breadth beyond those normally provided in the regular school program to satisfy the level of educational potential indicated (as cited in York Region District School Board, 2021a).

**Heterosexual:** Heterosexual refers to a person who is attracted to someone of the opposite sex.

**Identity-Based Data:** Identity-based data refers to information about various aspects of students' identities (e.g., racial / ethnic background, and sexual orientation). In the educational context, students from historically and currently marginalized communities face systemic barriers through policies, programs and practices that create or maintain disadvantages for these students. Collecting identity-based data is important for evaluating how well programs, resources and practices support students, and identify the groups of students who may be underserved in order to develop and revise programs, strategies, policies and teaching practices, as well as allocate resources and supports to improve school environments and help students succeed. The Ontario Human Rights Code permits and encourages the collection and analysis of identity data for the purposes of identifying and removing systemic barriers, preventing discrimination, and promoting equity and inclusivity.

**IEAC:** IEAC is an acronym that refers to YRDSB's Indigenous Education Advisory Council.

**Inclusive:** "Inclusive processes, policies, services, program and practices are accessible to and useable by as many people as possible, regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, age, disability, language, etc. An inclusive environment is open, safe, equitable and respectful. Everyone can enjoy a sense of trust, belonging and involvement, and everyone is encouraged to contribute and participate fully" (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Indigenous:** "Indigenous people identify as being descended from the Original Peoples of what is currently known as Canada. In this context, Indigenous peoples include people who may identify as First Nations (status and non-status), Métis and/or Inuit and any related identities" (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Intersectionality:** "Intersectionality is the way in which people's lives are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities and social locations, which, together, can produce a unique and distinct experience for that individual or group, for example, creating additional barriers, opportunities, and/or power imbalances. In the context of race and Indigenous identity, this means recognizing the ways in which people's experiences of racism or privilege, including within any one group, may vary depending on the individual's or group's relationship to additional overlapping or intersecting social identities, like religion, ethnic origin, gender, age, disabilities or citizenship and immigration status. An intersectional analysis enables better understanding of the impacts of any one particular systemic barrier by considering how that barrier may be interacting with other related factors" (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**IPRC:** IPRC is an acronym that refers to Identification, Placement, and Review Committee.

**Lesbian:** Lesbian refers to a female-identified person who experiences attraction to female-identifies people.

**Marginalization:** “Marginalization is a long-term, structural process of systemic discrimination that creates a class of disadvantaged minorities. Marginalized groups become permanently confined to the fringes of society. Their status is perpetuated through various dimensions of exclusion, particularly in the labour market, from full and meaningful participation in society” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Mixed Methods:** Mixed methods involve the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods.

**MP:** MP is an acronym used for modified programs.

**Non-Binary:** Non-binary refers to a person whose gender identity does not align with the binary concept of gender such as man or woman.

**Not Reported (NR):** NR denotes where in tables or graphs there were less than 15 students in a particular group and therefore the resulting figure is Not Reported (NR) to preserve the privacy of the students.

**Oppression:** Oppression refers to the “a situation in which people are governed in an unfair and cruel way and prevented from having opportunities and freedom” (dictionary.combridge.org, 2021).

**OSSLT:** OSSLT is an acronym that refers to the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test, a literacy test that students typically write in grade 10. The successful completion of this test (or the completion of an alternative literacy course) is one of the requirements of earning an OSSD (Ontario Secondary School Diploma).

**Pansexual:** Pansexual refer to a person who experiences attraction to people of diverse sexes and / or genders. The term pansexual reflects a desire to recognize the potential for attraction to sexes and / or genders that exist across a spectrum and to challenge the sex / gender binary.

**Program of Study:** The course level in which the student took the majority of their courses in their Grade 9 year.

**Provincial Standard:** In Ontario, there are four different degrees of student achievement for any given subject/subject. “Level 3 is the ‘provincial standard’. . . Level 1 identifies achievement that falls much below the provincial standard. Level 2 identifies achievement that approaches the standard. Level 4 identifies achievement that surpasses the standard (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p.143).

**Queer:** Queer refers to some members within 2SLGBTQ+ communities, particularly youth, as a symbol of pride and affirmation of diversity. This term makes space for the expression of a variety of identities outside of rigid categories associated with sex, gender or attraction. It can be used by a community to encompass a broad spectrum of identities related to sex, gender or attraction, or by an individual to reflect the interrelatedness of these aspects of their identity

**Questioning:** Questioning refers to a person who is unsure about their own sexual orientation.

**Race:** “Race is a term used to classify people into groups based principally on physical traits (phenotypes) such as skin colour. Racial categories are not based on science or biology but on differences that society has created (i.e., “socially constructed”), with significant consequences for people’s lives. Racial categories may vary over time and place and can overlap with ethnic, cultural or religious groupings” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Racialized (person or group):** “Racialized persons and/or groups can have racial meanings attributed to them in ways that negatively impact their social, political, and economic life. This includes but is not necessarily limited to people classified as “visible minorities” under the Canadian census and may include people impacted by antisemitism and Islamophobia” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Racism:** “Racism includes ideas or practices that establish, maintain or perpetuate the racial superiority or dominance of one group over another” (Government of Ontario, 2021). These ideas and practices are maintained when racial prejudice is so often backed by systems of power (Oluo, 2018)

**Reflexivity:** Reflexivity is a technique used in qualitative research involving the practice of questioning one’s own taken for granted assumptions. This may involve making transparent multiple perspectives or interpretations in the written report, particularly ones beneath the master narrative. It involves staying “awake” (Clandinin et al., 2010, p. 82) to what is provided and what is not, what is heard as well as the silence. It also involves the ability to disclose biases rooted from personal experiences.

**Reliability and Validity:** Reliability and validity are measures used to evaluate the rigour of quantitative research. These terms are reconceptualized, however, within qualitative research, challenging the notion of a single objective truth that can be “accurately,” or close to “accurately,” measured (Bold, 2012). Through a qualitative lens, the trustworthiness of research resides in readers’ ability to find their own truth through “the relevance of lives explored” (Bold, 2012), and rejects that of a single truth to be applied or replicated to multiple contexts for generalizability or “accuracy” purposes.

**SEAC:** SEAC is an acronym that refers to YRDSB’s Special Education Advisory Committee.

**Sexual Orientation:** Sexual orientation is a personal characteristic that forms part of who you are. It covers the range of human sexuality and is different from gender identity.

**Social Identity:** Social identity refers to a person’s sense of who they are based on the social groups the person was born into and belongs to. People can identify or be identified by others on the basis of their social identity (and their intersections). This aspect of an individual’s self-conception is not based on their personal qualities (e.g., skills and abilities).



**Social Location:** Social Location (Positionality) refers to the recognition that where you stand in relation to others in society shapes what you can see and understand. It is how people are impacted by social relations of inequity (e.g., gender, race, ethnicity, immigrant status, disability, class, age, etc.) as well as their intersections (see Vosko, 2006). Social location emphasizes that inequity is complex, and that people hold positions of dominance and subordination in different contexts (Anthias, 2012)

**SSC:** SSC is an acronym used for student support centre.

**Streaming:** Streaming refers to the separation of students into different course types (streams). In Ontario, students are currently streamed for Math, English, Science, Geography, History and French. The course types (streams) for these Grade 9 and 10 courses are Academic, Applied and Locally Developed (York Region District School Board, 2021b).

**Stigma:** Stigma is defined as a harmful negative stereotype (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2021).

**Students Identified with Special Education Needs:** “Students who have been formally identified by an Identification, Placement and Review Committee (IPRC), as well as students who have an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Students whose sole identified exceptionality is Gifted are not included” (EQAO, 2019, p.38). Special education needs is a classification of students for school to provide specialized or intensive programming and support. It is closely associated with Program of Study (Brown & Sinay 2008; Brown & Parekh, 2010) or “streaming” and is widely considered to be strongly connected to postsecondary access.

**Systemic Barriers:** Systemic barriers are policies, programs and practices that result in particular groups of students receiving inequitable access to opportunities or being excluded in a way that creates or maintains disadvantages for these marginalized groups.

**Systemic Racism:** “Systemic racism consists of organizational culture, policies, directives, practices or procedures that exclude, displace or marginalize some racialized groups or create unfair barriers for them to access valuable benefits and opportunities. This is often the result of institutional biases in organizational culture, policies, directives, practices, and procedures that may appear neutral but have the effect of privileging some groups and disadvantaging others” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Threshold:** “A threshold is a value that, if met or exceeded, indicates an inequality. Determining an appropriate threshold helps to interpret the meaning of the numerical results and indicates whether the magnitude of the disproportionality and disparity indices represents a notable difference for further investigation, monitoring, and/or potential action” (Government of Ontario, 2021).

**Transgender:** Transgender refers to a person whose gender identity differs from the one associated with their birth-assigned sex.

**Two-Spirit:** Two-spirit refers to an Indigenous person whose gender identity, spiritual identity or sexual orientation includes masculine, feminine, or non-binary spirits.

**2SLGBQ+:** 2SLGBQ+ is an acronym used in this report to refer to two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning. 2SLGBTQ+ is an acronym often used as an umbrella term to encompass a much wider range of identities and experiences related to sex, gender and attraction that fall outside the dominant norms of heterosexual and cisgender. In this report, the “T” for transgender is not included when the acronym is used in reference to Sexual Orientation. Transgender is included under gender identity.

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