

LONDON  
YOUTH  
ASSEMBLY

**The impact of COVID-19 on education  
& opportunities for young people in  
London**

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## Executive Summary

In May 2021, the London Youth Assembly (LYA) launched a survey as part of its research into the effects of COVID-19 and lockdowns on education in London. The survey asked young people questions in relation to their experience of education throughout the pandemic, as well as more general questions about the curriculum and education. The survey also touched on broader relationships between young people and local youth services that are provided across London by local authorities. The survey received 1024 responses. Thanks to the demographic data collected in the survey, the LYA was able to conclude that responses were received from a diverse array of young people from across London. Young people from every year group from Year 7 to Year 13 participated in the survey, as well as young people from all but one of the London Boroughs.

The data collected from the survey identified responses from young people from a wide range of backgrounds including young people of different gender, race, and borough location. However, given the variety of identifying demographics the LYA were unable to define results through these characteristics, in an effort to maintain anonymity for respondents, as well as ensuring the results identified were robust enough to draw legitimate conclusions and recommendations. Results were studied and displayed to show the findings from respondents as one group. The overall findings suggest that there are areas identified by young Londoners where substantial improvement in education and provision of youth services would be needed moving forward.

The following report sets out a series of findings from the **London Youth Assembly Survey on Education in London** as well as a series of suggested recommendations for the Mayor of London. The LYA understand that some of the areas are not within the remit of the Mayor of London to address. Where the Mayor does not have the remit to address certain recommendations, the LYA requests that the Mayor lobby central government and work alongside London boroughs where necessary to enact the proposals.

This report, the findings and recommendations have been shared with various local authorities and youth services to try and implement relevant recommendations, as well as review the survey findings and ensure they address areas of concern. Local authorities are encouraged to work alongside one another and the Mayor of London to put recommendations in place and ensure that there is equity in the youth services that are provided to young people across London. The LYA believes that the borough in which you reside and attend school should not have an impact on the quality of education and youth services that are available to you.

The report has been divided into the three key areas that were the focus of the LYA survey: Quality of Education; Cultural Immersion Education; and Knowledge, Awareness & Contribution.

## Quality of Education

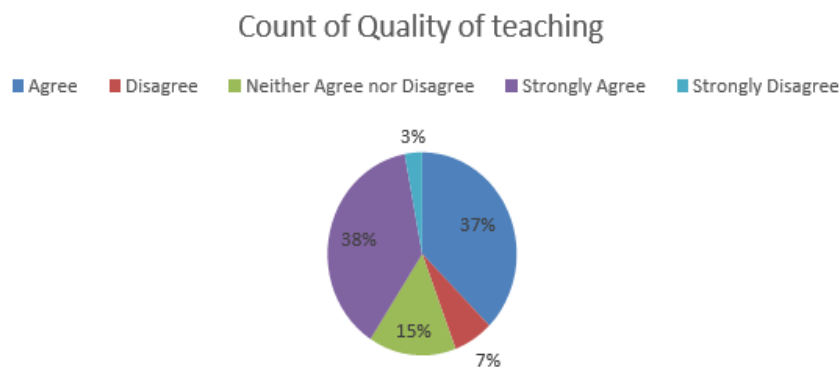
Young people were asked a series of questions about their opinions and experience of the education system. The questions focused on quality of teaching, teaching methods, educational content, access to resources, and classroom and home environments. The findings suggested a general consensus on key issues from respondents. 75 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the quality of teaching had an impact on their education. Similarly, 76 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that teaching methods had an impact on their education. The response figures clearly show that the impact of quality of teaching and teaching methods on educational experience for young people is huge. However, the LYA was not able to develop further findings about the positive and negative examples in these areas. Despite this, the LYA believe it is pivotal that teaching methods and the quality of teaching be equal across all schools in London to ensure that all young people are given the same opportunities and educational experience.

### Recommendation 1

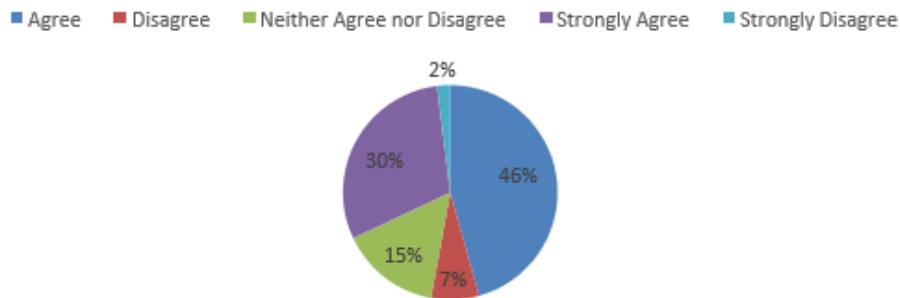
The LYA recommends that the Mayor of London carry out further work to understand the differences in quality of teaching and teaching methods across London schools and the positive and negative impact this has on young Londoners' educational experience to ensure there is equity across the education field.

A breakdown of the findings from this section of the survey are listed below.

When asked about what factors had an impact on the quality of education respondents said:



### Count of Teaching methods



Our survey found that 64 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that access to resources had an impact on their education. Substantial amounts of work were carried out throughout the pandemic by central and local government to improve the access that young people had to resources to aid their education, particularly when home schooling was required. This experience demonstrated the vast disparities of access to resources for young people. The LYA survey echoes the issues that were highlighted through the pandemic and it is understood that further work needs to be carried out to understand how these disparities look as London moves into the recovery phase of the pandemic.

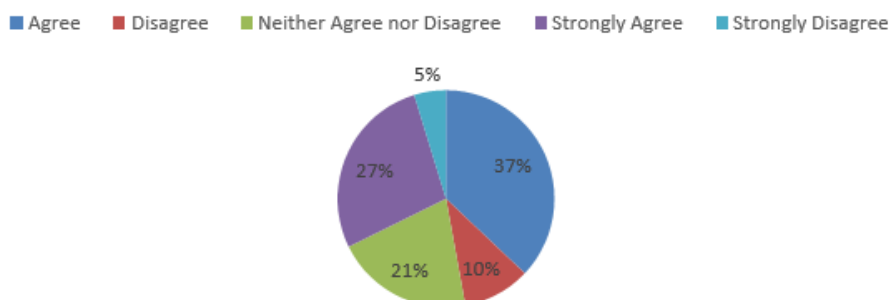
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## Recommendation 2

The LYA recommends that further work be carried out by the Mayor of London to understand the barriers to resources for young people across London. Work should take place to ensure that all young people have equal access to resources to aid their education. This should include ensuring that all schools have appropriate resources to provide to students, and individual circumstances of a young person should not have a disproportionately negative impact on their ability to complete schoolwork with the required resources.

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### Count of Access to resources

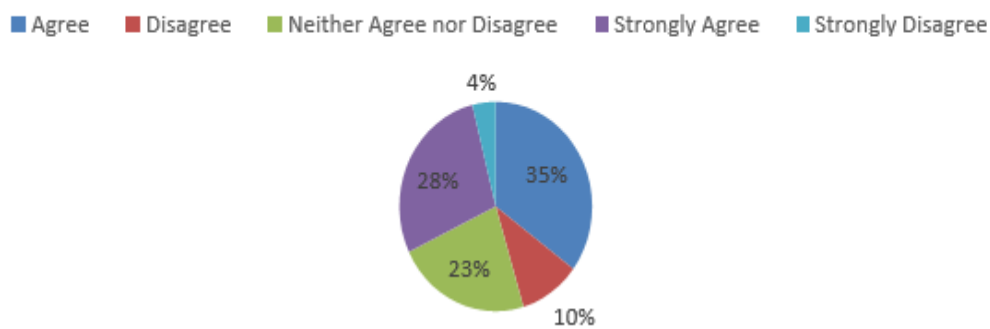


Finally, the survey asked young people about the impact that both the classroom and home environment had on their education. 63 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the classroom environment had an impact on their education,

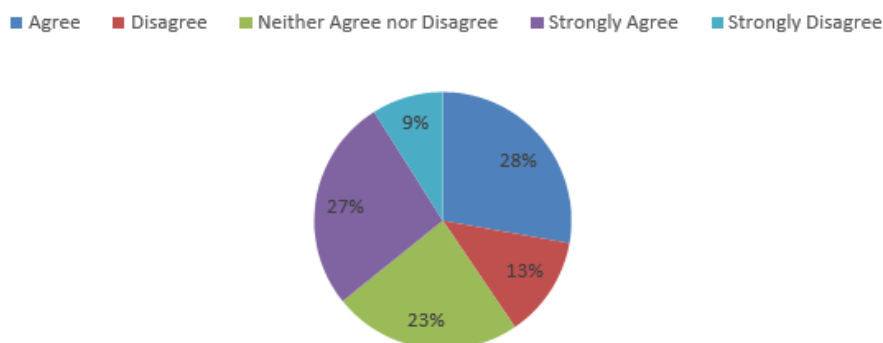
and 55 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the home environment had an impact on their education. With more than 50 per cent of respondents noting that the environments in schools and at home impact their education, it is clear that work needs to be carried out to ensure that both of these environments are safe and nurturing to young people to ensure that they are capable of receiving the best quality education. The LYA believes that continued work to support young people across London is vital, and a key part of this is educating young people on how to access support to ensure that safe environments are available. The recommendations in sections two and three of this report will help to ensure that young people know where to turn to raise issues and ask for help in these circumstances.

The findings in relation to these questions are listed below for information.

## Count of Classroom environment



## Count of Home environment



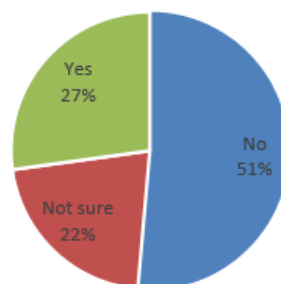
## Cultural Immersion in Education

The next section of the survey explored cultural immersion in school environments, and issues that young people face when it comes to discrimination and prejudice. These questions aimed to explore to what extent diverse cultures are reflected in school teaching, as well as the levels of discrimination that young people have faced in education settings. The following sets out the statistics that were developed from the survey findings, alongside a series of examples that respondents included in their answers. Whilst the statistics and examples included raise concerns that form the basis of the recommendations, the LYA does not believe that these statistics are fully representative of the extent of issues surrounding discrimination within education settings. The following results should be taken as an example of the discrimination that young people face but should not be seen as the only examples nor the full extent of the issue.

When asked if respondents had ever felt discriminated against at school or college based on their gender, race, ethnicity, religion or sexuality, the survey received 273 responses in the affirmative. As outlined at the beginning of this report, the results cannot be broken down via gender, race, or ethnicity and therefore it is not possible to comment on any of the background or content of the discrimination faced by young people. However, participants provided some examples of the discrimination they faced and how this was dealt with by their education providers. Some of these examples have been included.

Of the 1009 responses to this question, 27 per cent of respondents said they had faced discrimination within the school environment.

Responses to the question "Have you ever felt discriminated against at school/college based on your gender, race, ethnicity, religion or sexuality?"



Participants were asked to explain what response was given within their education setting to address the discrimination they had faced. A vast number of respondents detailed that no response was provided by the school. In cases where the school did respond, it was often unsatisfactory to the student. Young people also noted that on many occasions they did not feel in a position to raise the issue with the school.

*"I tried to raise these issues to the head teacher to be brushed off."*

*"For most forms of discrimination, it seems that all that is done is a poster is put up or something."*

*“My school ran events and PSHE lessons to discuss LGBT+ issues, but teachers were not consistent in calling out discriminatory language when they heard it.”*

*“Raising such issues with the school would only be problematic for me.” “My parents tried talking to the teacher, but again promises were broken.”*

*“None, because most children, as I, are afraid to speak up because we know that authority will not take it seriously and brush us off.”*

*“They told us not to talk about it in school and keep it out of the school environment.”*

*“There wasn’t any because it’s just a societal norm at this point.”*

Other students detailed more positive responses from their education providers, many of which could be considered by other schools that face similar issues with discrimination. A series of examples from respondents are included below.

*“Our school, personally, are coming up with an LGBTQ+ society among students to help feedback to staff on how they can be more inclusive.”*

*“A video was made by the school addressing the sexual harassment topic.”*

*“The school added a more comfortable, anonymous way of reporting it without disclosing who it happened to but who did it.”*

The LYA notes that discrimination is still a clear problem that young people face, and there are a number of ways that education providers could help to reduce discrimination through education. A key finding from the survey was that most young people who had faced discrimination felt there was no follow-up to the actions or did not feel comfortable to share the experience with school authorities. In response to this, the LYA sets out a series of recommendations to the Mayor of London.

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### **Recommendation 1**

The LYA recommends that a separate body is established to handle complaints of discrimination within schools. An Independent School Complaints Commissioner (ISCC) should be established to allow young people to report experiences of discrimination if they do not feel comfortable doing this within the school environment. The ISCC should then pose direct recommendations to the relevant school and be empowered to follow up progress. It is recommended that this body should be set up following consultation with the LYA, young people across London as well as education providers.

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### **Recommendation 2**

The LYA recommends that a more concerted effort should be made to ensure there is diversity across the staffing of schools, including different roles, departments, subjects, and seniority. This should ensure representation and role models for all students.

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## Recommendation 3

The LYA recommends that unconscious bias training become mandatory for every teacher across London. This training should help to ensure that teachers are both aware of discrimination that young people may face in schools, how to deal with it, and how to avoid any potential bias in the classroom.

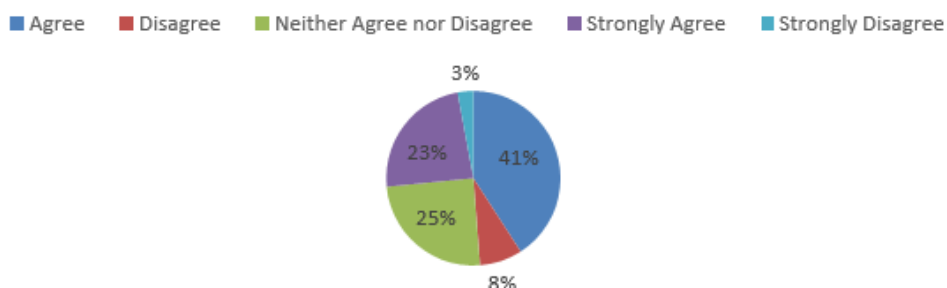
The LYA survey also asked a series of questions about the diversity and inclusivity of education settings and the curriculum. Responses were fairly positive when young people were asked to rate how diverse and inclusive their schools were, with the average response being 7.68 out of 10. Similarly, when asked if young people integrated with other cultures at school the average response was 7.74 out of 10. These responses demonstrate that young people feel that they are positive about their personal ability to integrate within diverse environments.

However, responses were less positive when young people were asked about their education provider allowing sufficient time and resources to the learning and celebration of other cultures. When asked to rate the statements from 1-10, 1 being not at all, 10 being very much, in response to the statement “your school/college dedicates a sufficient amount of time for celebrating and learning about other cultures” the average score was only 6.06. Similarly, when given the statement “you think your school is doing well when it comes to celebrating and learning about other cultures”, the average score was only 5.97.

When looking at the responses in the quality of education section of the survey, the LYA found that 64 per cent of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that educational content had an impact on their education. Looking at these two areas together it is possible to ascertain that there are clear gaps within educational content, in particular when it comes to the knowledge and celebration of other cultures.

The LYA recognises that the Mayor of London has previously called on the Government to “ensure the National Curriculum better reflects the diversity of the country”<sup>1</sup> and that the Mayor partnered with The Black Curriculum<sup>2</sup> to review all three of the London Curriculum’s KS3 history units, which have now been refreshed and are available for education providers to use<sup>3</sup>. However, the LYA still believes that more can be done to imbed diversity and different cultures within London schools.

Count of Educational Content



<sup>1</sup> [Mayor calls for a more diverse National Curriculum | London City Hall](#)

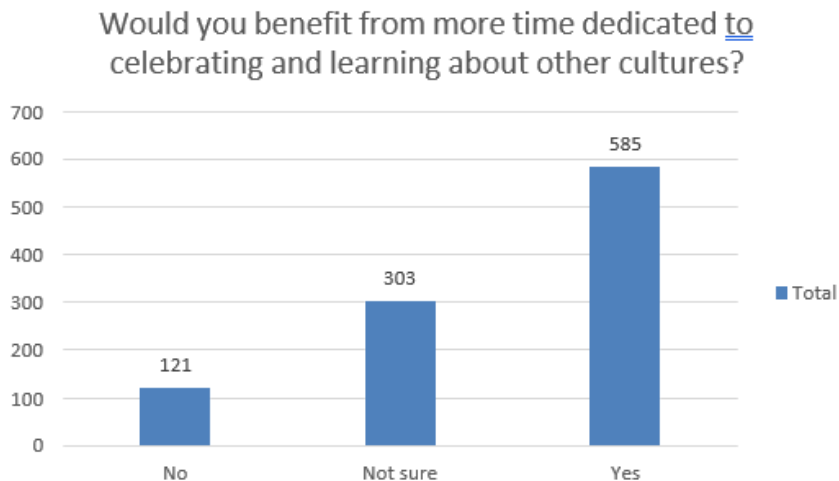
<sup>2</sup> [The Black Curriculum](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Webinars | London City Hall](#)

## Recommendation 4

The LYA recommends that PSHE could be a positive space to introduce greater diversity within the school curriculum. It is recommended that the PSHE Association work alongside Members of the LYA to develop a more diverse and positive curriculum that covers different cultures. This would also be an opportunity to develop more substantive learning opportunities on issues that young people should have greater understanding of including but not limited to, discrimination faced by marginalised communities, sexual assault and consent, mental health and, cultural history and awareness.

The LYA would also like to recognise that the majority of survey respondents said they felt that they would benefit from more time dedicated to learning and celebrating other cultures. The LYA believes that these are important issues that should be addressed for the benefit of a generation of young Londoners.



## Recommendation 5

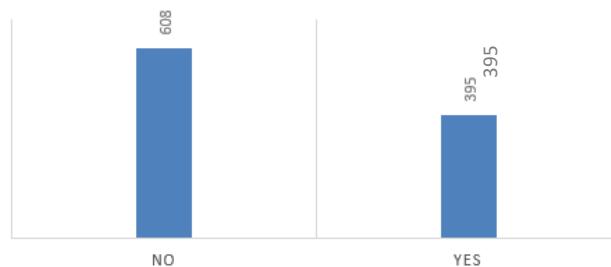
The LYA recommends that further work should be carried out to imbed learning of other cultures across the curriculum to ensure there is balance of represented cultures across learning in education settings.

## Knowledge, Awareness & Contribution

This final section of the survey focused on the knowledge and awareness young people have regarding youth services and their involvement in the decision-making processes that develop youth services across London.

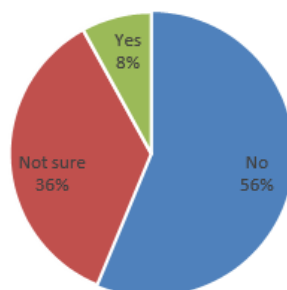
When asked 'do you know where to go as a young person to contribute your thoughts, opinions and ideas on current issues?', more than 60 per cent of respondents said they did not. The LYA believes this is a clear indication that more needs to be done by London Leaders, Councils and Youth Services to ensure that young people know where they can go to get involved and have their voices heard.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE TO GO AS A YOUNG PERSON IF YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE YOUR THOUGHTS, OPINIONS AND IDEAS ON CURRENT ISSUES?



Only eight per cent of respondents said they had been asked by their local council for their input on services and schemes run for young people. This suggested to us that not only are services that are provided for young people not being developed with young people, but also that young people across London may not be aware of the services and schemes that are available to them.

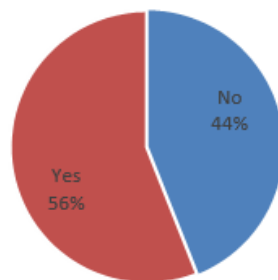
Has your local council ever asked for your input on services and schemes run for young people?



Despite not being asked by their local council to contribute towards ideas, a majority of our respondents said that they would consider contributing their thoughts and ideas on project

that concern young people. This response rate suggests there is a much greater appetite for participation that is being sought and found by local councils. There should also be consideration of the 44 per cent of respondents who said they would not consider contributing their ideas to their local council. Work should be done by local councils and youth services to engage with young people and ensure they know that their thoughts and ideas are welcomed by local councils.

Would you consider contributing your thoughts and ideas to your local council on projects concerning young people?



To note, that when asked why they would not engage with local councils on these projects, the most popular answers were that individuals were not interested and that individuals were not sure where or when these events took place in order to contribute.

The LYA believes there needs to be a clear and unified approach across London to engage young people and ensure they are aware of the local youth services that are available to them. Members of the LYA agree that the current promotion of youth services by both the Greater London Authority (GLA) and local councils is minimal. The following set of recommendations are for the Mayor of London and local authorities across city.

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## Recommendation 1

The LYA recommends that all London Borough Councils and the GLA should have a clear and easy to find section on their website about their local youth council and other youth forums, including the LYA.

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## Recommendation 2

The LYA recommends that there is a contacts section directed at young people available on every council website. This should include how to contact youth related services, but also contact details on specific topics that impact young people. This should also include a suggestion or question box directed towards local youth services.

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## Recommendation 3

The LYA recommends that further promotional activity is undertaken to ensure that young people from diverse backgrounds across London know what their local youth council or forum is, and how they can get involved. These activities should be promoted directly in schools

across the whole of London. It is also recommended that London Assembly Members and the Mayor of London promote these services in public spaces whenever possible.

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## **Recommendation 4**

The LYA recommends that there should be a specific space for young people across London to tell their local council and the Mayor of London what they think at any given time. Young people should not be expected to be fully immersed in a service or experience in order to offer feedback. There should be space to share their thoughts on an issue or a service provided, easily, at any time and without there being a wider specific consultation in place.

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## Final remarks

Members of the LYA would like to note their thanks to respondents of the survey, as well as the Mayor of London for taking the time to read this report and the associated recommendations. This report will be shared online and distributed to local council leaders, as the LYA understands that all of the changes that are needed across London education and youth services cannot be achieved by the Mayor alone. The LYA encourages the Mayor of London, local councils, and education providers to work together to try to implement the recommendations that have been laid out. Young people across London have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and ensuring that education and youth services are of the best quality for every young Londoner will be imperative to ensuring that they have the highest quality of life and education now and in the future. The LYA recognises that a “New Deal for Young People”<sup>4</sup> is part of the Mayor of London’s recovery missions following the COVID-19 pandemic, and the LYA believes that this mission can be achieved by listening to the voices of young people across London. We encourage everyone across London to listen to the voices of young people that have been shared through these survey findings and push to enact the changes that will help young people have positive experiences across education and youth services in London.

The LYA invites the Mayor of London to respond to the proposed recommendations by **01 October 2021**. The LYA welcomes a written response to these recommendations and would be happy to meet with the Mayor to discuss any of these ideas further. The LYA remains keen to work alongside the Mayor of London to develop and implement as many of these recommendations as possible to ensure the best experience across education and youth services for young people in London.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.slideshare.net/secret/59E732XEeRLTXc>

## Contributors to the report

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