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Research
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Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on those with disabilities: Findings from Growing Up in Ireland

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Presentation Overview

- Brief overview of disabilities and related social and health implications
- Overview of the COVID pandemic for those with a disability
- The present study:
 - Sample Description
 - Health related differences
 - Emotional Well-Being related differences

Background – Persons with Disabilities Pre-COVID

- WHO: Disability refers to the interaction between individuals with a health condition and personal and environmental factors
- Those with disabilities are more likely to face:
 - Poverty, economic and educational inequality, and unemployment
 - Poor health and increased interaction with healthcare services
 - Poor mental health
 - Discrimination and social exclusion

Background – Disabilities in Ireland

- 13.5% of the population (almost 650,000) have a disability (CSO,2016)
- Less likely to be in employment
- More likely to finish education earlier
- 50% more likely to experience discrimination and exclusion



Background – Disability During COVID

- Global concern that the pandemic is disproportionately affecting those with disabilities.
- Increased risk of:
 - Developing severe C19 disease
 - Increased mortality rate from C19
 - Difficulty practicing routine preventative measures
 - Reduced access to healthcare
 - Anxiety, stress, and depression
 - Discrimination and undermining of rights
- Boyle et al., (2020); Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2020); Pettinicchio et al., (2021)

The Current Study

- Uses data from the special GUI COVID-19 survey
- Focus on young adults from Cohort '98 who were aged ~22 years during data collection
- Data were collected during early December 2020

Measures

- Outcome measures: Experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic
 - Vulnerability to COVID-19
 - Contracted COVID-19
 - Access to health services
 - Informal health support
 - Life satisfaction
 - Optimism
 - CES-D 8 Scores
 - Informal emotional support
- Longitudinal Data from Wave 4 (age 20)
 - Disability & disability type
 - Family composition and social class
 - Family financial strain
 - PCG employment status

Sample

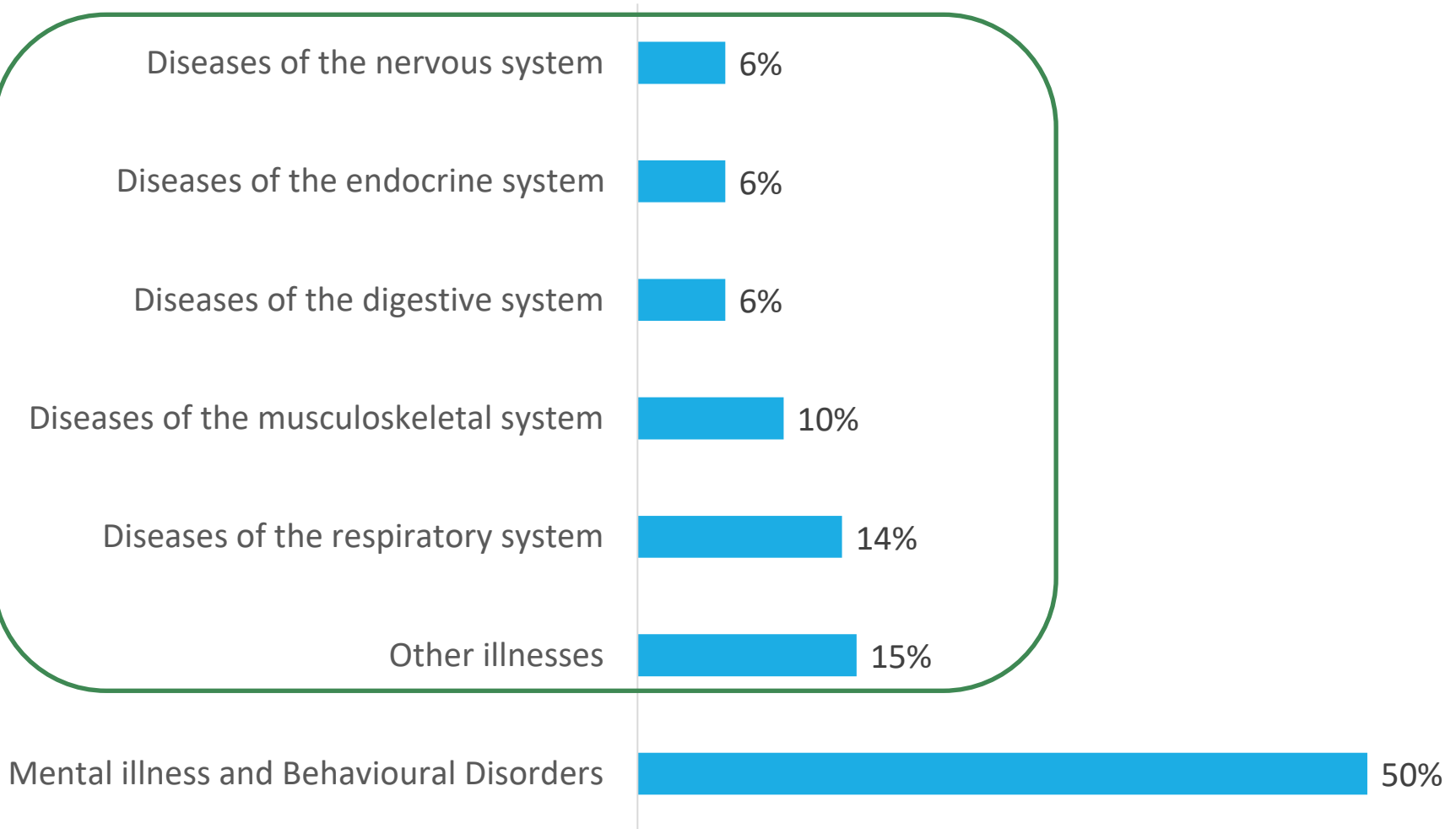
- N = 1, 979
 - Removed those who did not answer key variables in both the COVID survey and Wave 4
- 16.2% (n=320) reported a disability at Wave 4
- No significant difference between YAs with and without a disability in:
 - Family reported difficulty making ends meet at age 20
 - Income quintile at age 20
 - PCG Education level at 20
 - One vs two-parent family at age 20
 - Living arrangement at time of COVID survey

Notes

- Explorative, descriptive study
- The majority of YAs with disabilities reported living in the family home at the time of the COVID survey (70%)
 - Many of the issues reported for those with disabilities during the pandemic were related to those living in congregated settings (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2020).

Sample Background – Disability Type

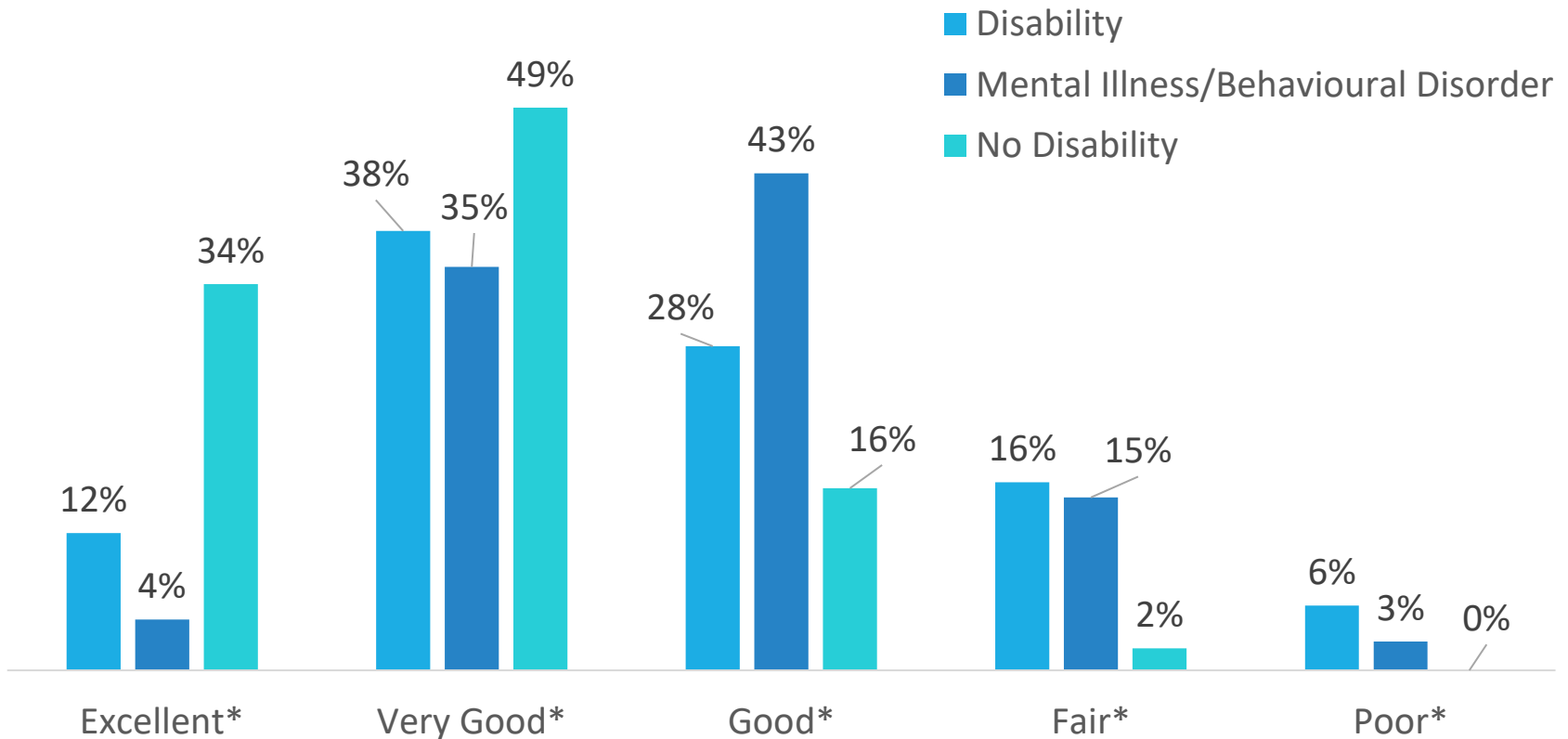
- Disability Type (Age 20) (n=320)



Sample Background – Self Rated Health

- Health at age 20

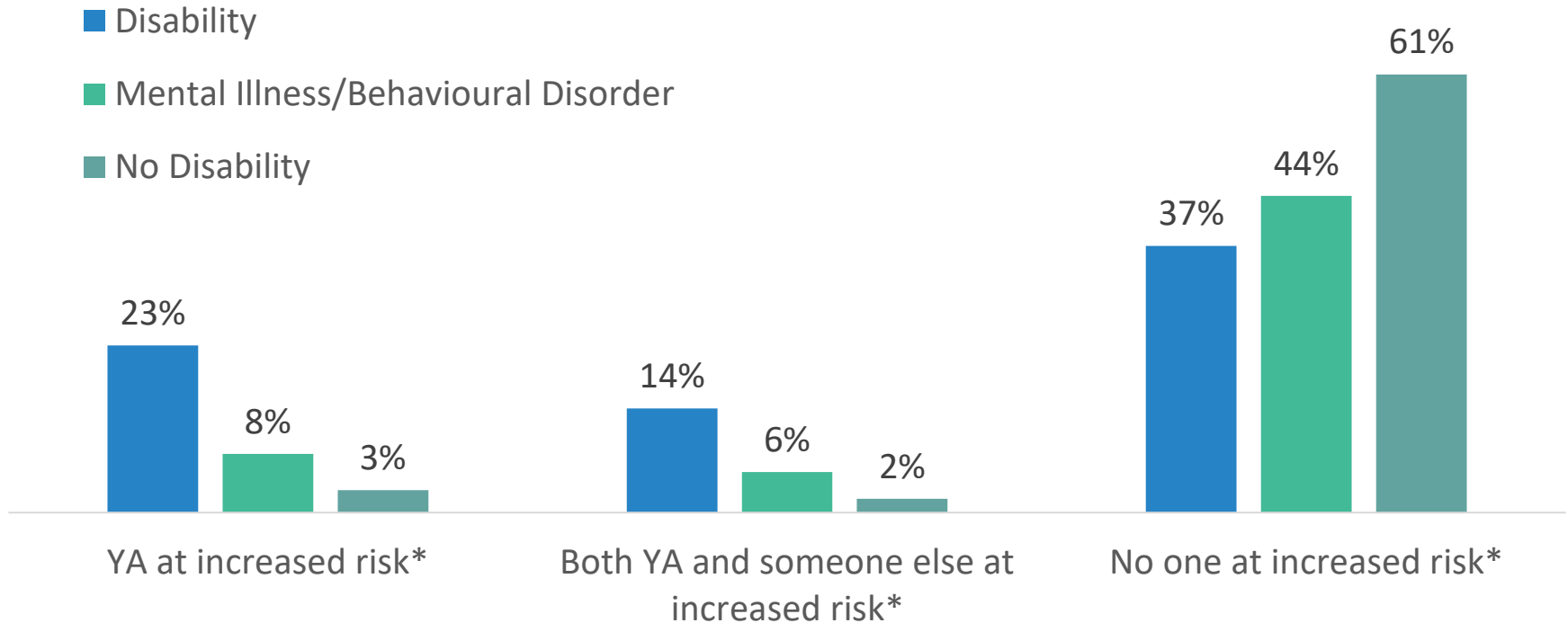
Self Rated Health at Age 20





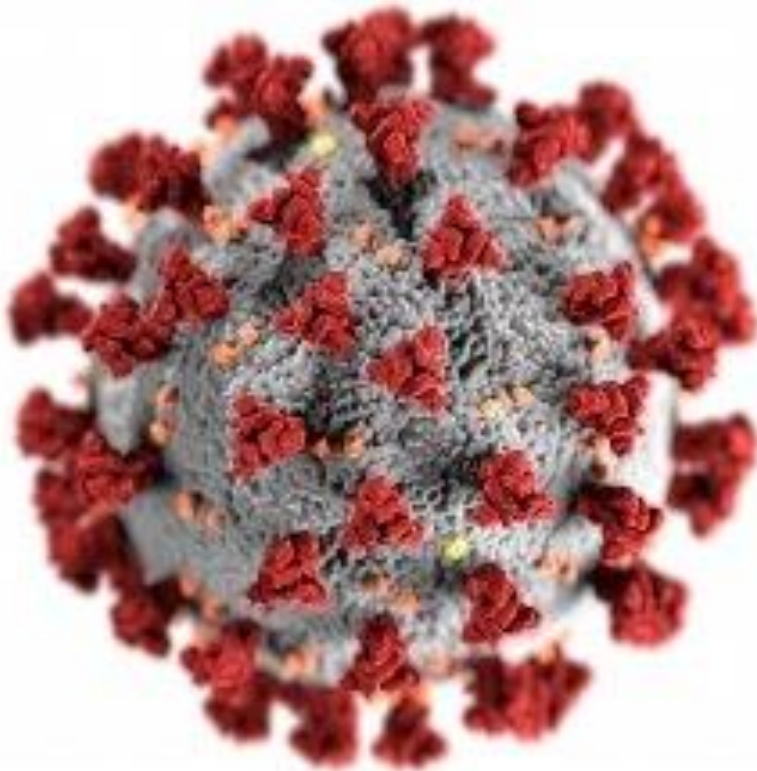
Health - Vulnerability to COVID-19

Increased Vulnerability to Severe COVID-19 Symptoms



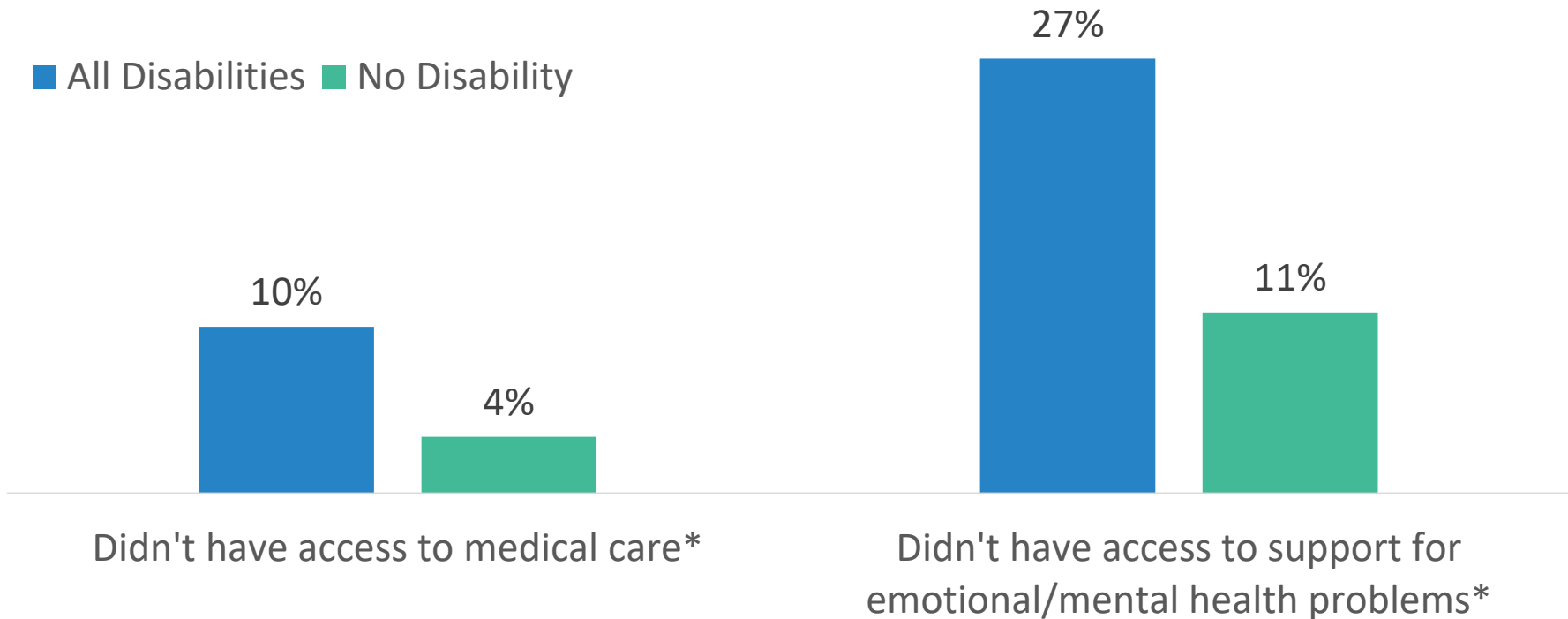
- Significantly more YAs with a disability at increased risk of developing severe COVID-19

Health - Contracted COVID-19



- Contracted COVID-19:
- 7.5% of YA with a mental illness/behavioural disorder
- 5.6% of YA with a disability
- 3.7% of YA without a disability
- No significant differences between groups

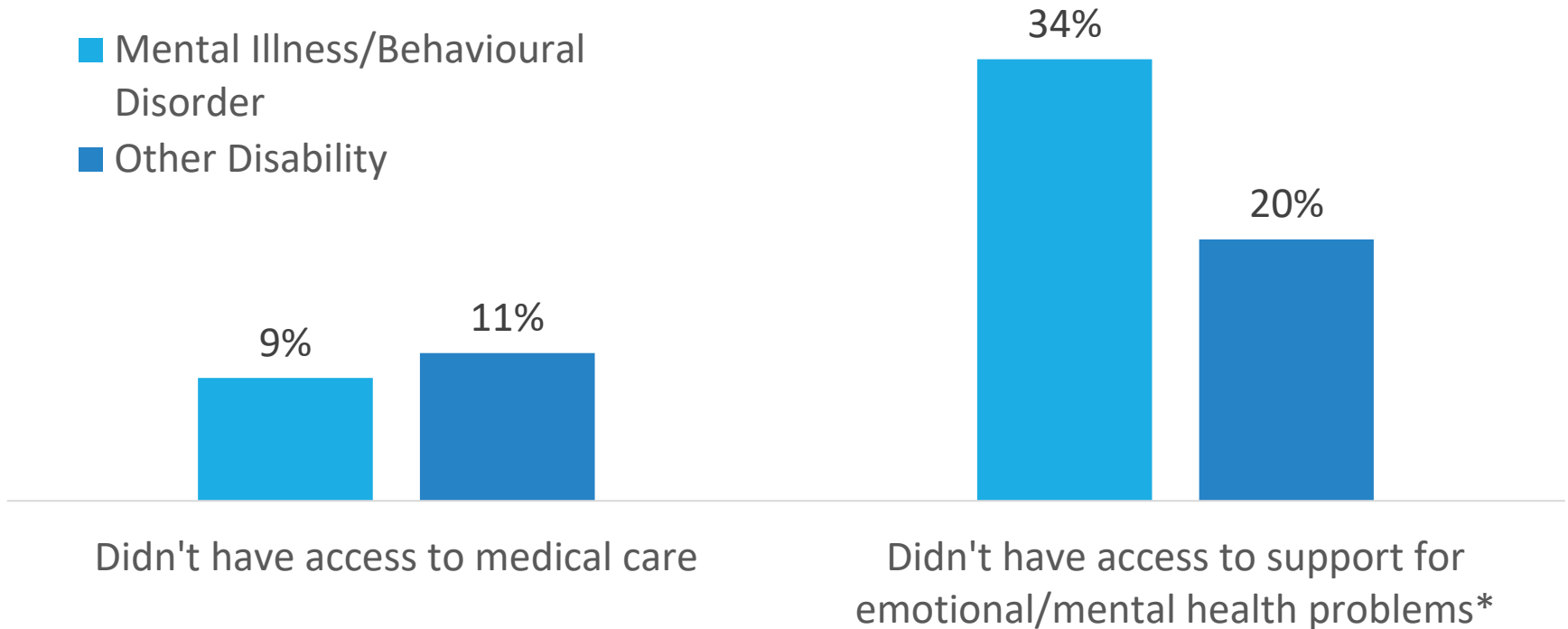
Health – Access to Services



– Reduced Access to both medical and mental health services due to the COVID 19 Pandemic for YP with disabilities

- However, more than 1 in 10 YAs without a disability did not have access to support for emotional/mental health problems

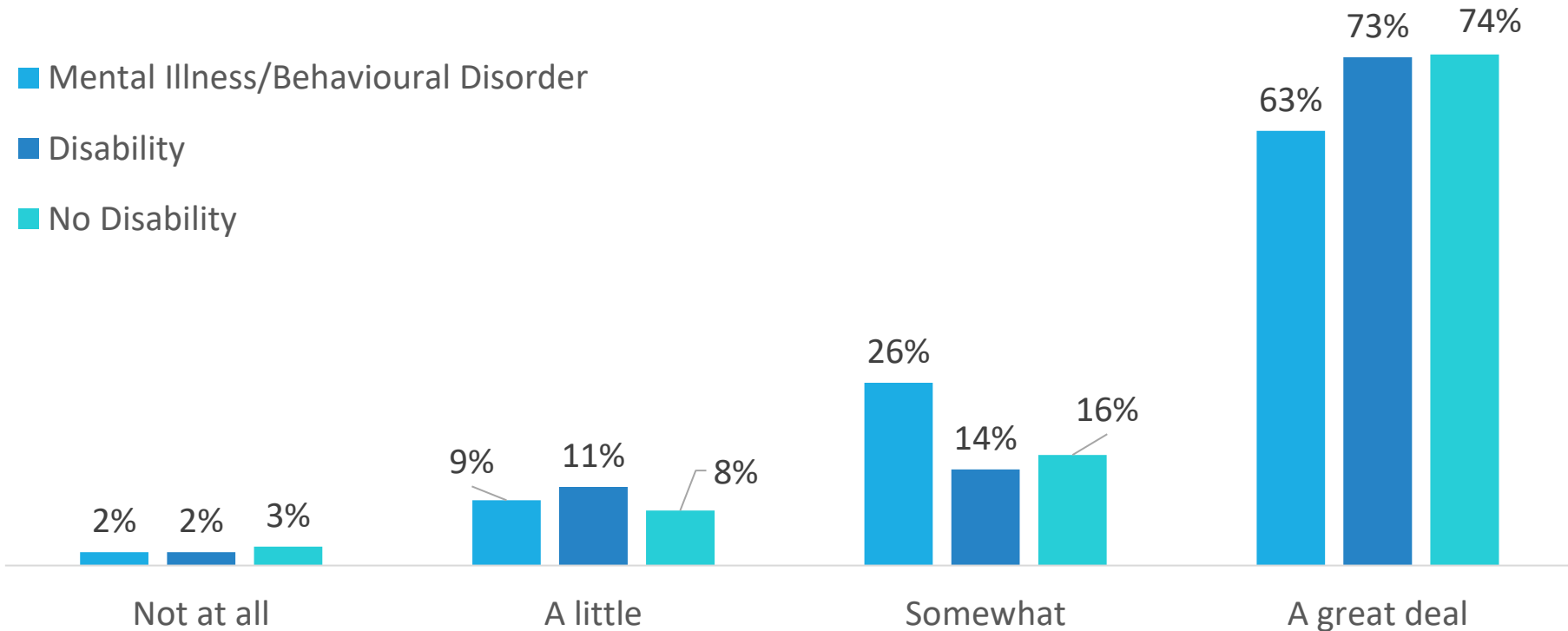
Health – Access to Services by Disability Type



- Significantly higher number of YAs with MI/BD did not have access to support for emotional/mental health problems compared to those with other disabilities – still 1 in 5 with an other disability.

Health – Informal Support

Could Depend on People at Home to Help if Sick

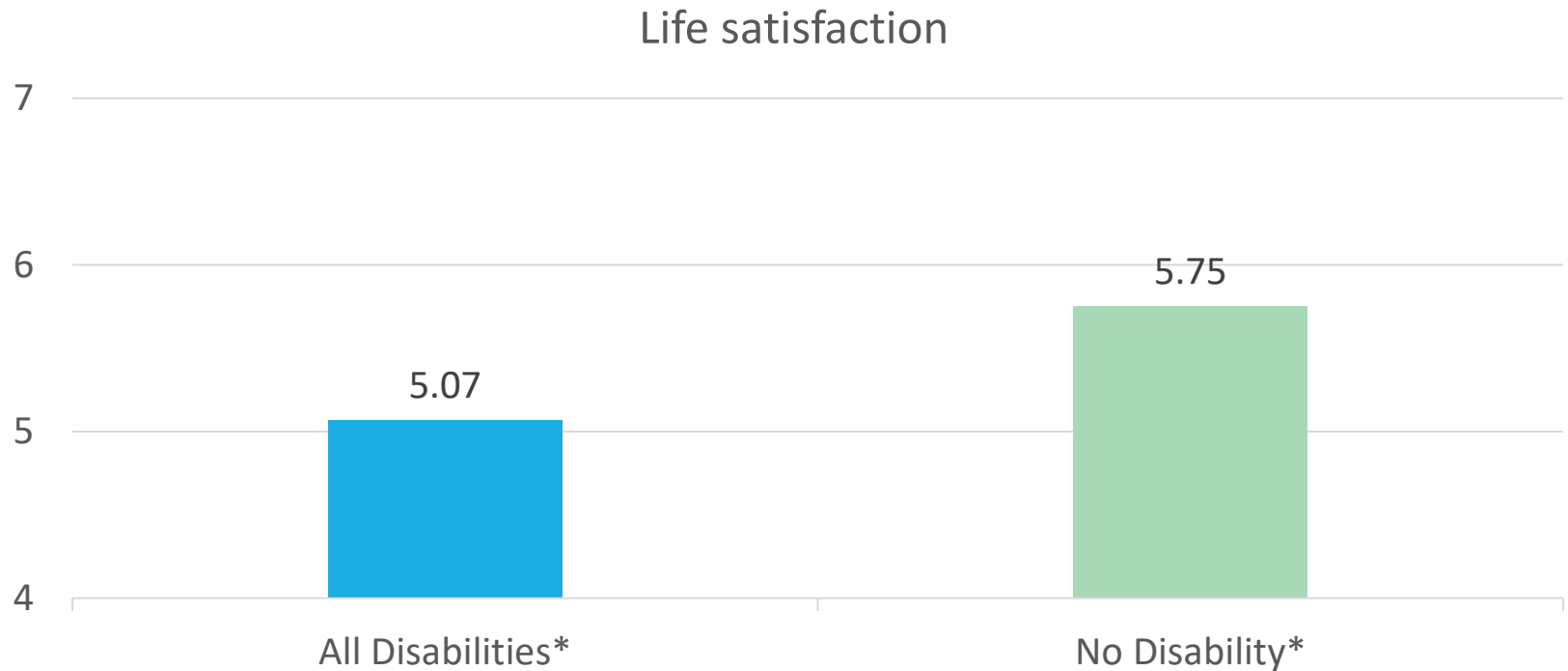


– Generally, YAs across all three groups reported being able to depend on the people around them if they were ill

Emotional Wellbeing



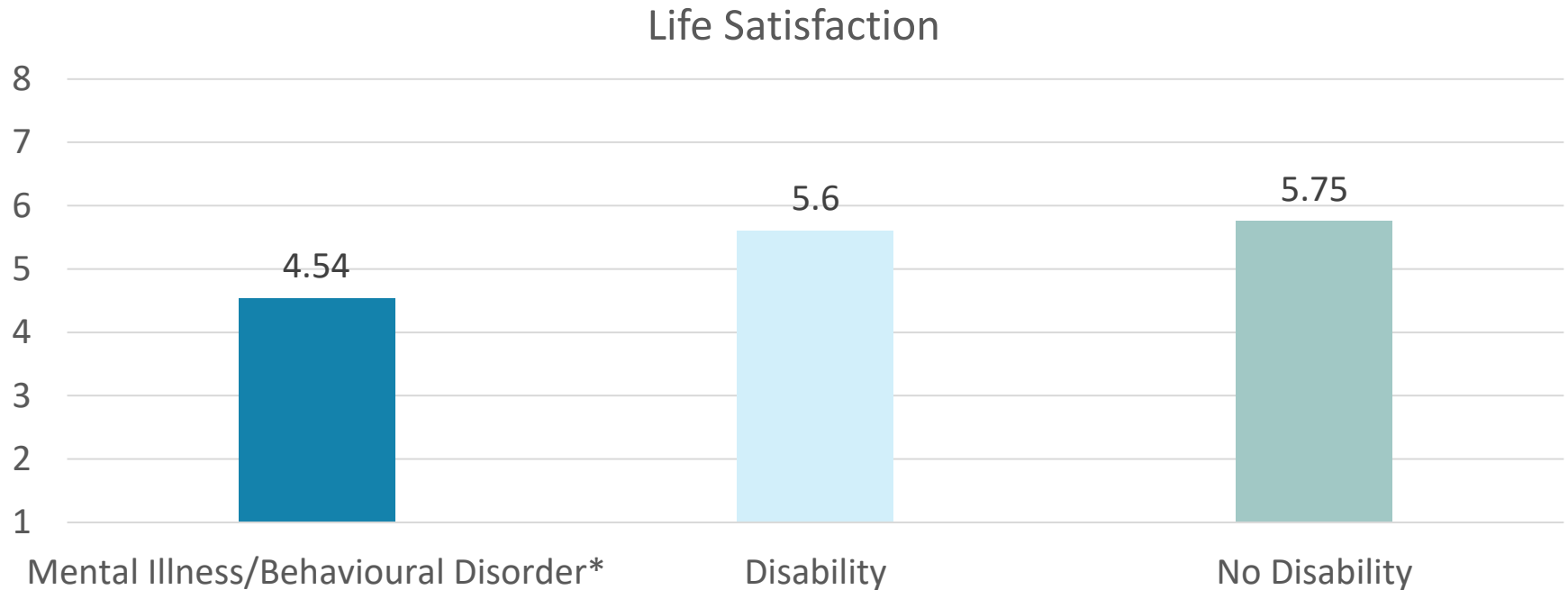
Emotional Wellbeing – Life Satisfaction



– An independent t-test revealed that YAs with a disability were significantly less satisfied with life compared with those without a disability

- $t(1974) = -4.969, p < .001$

Emotional Wellbeing – Life Satisfaction

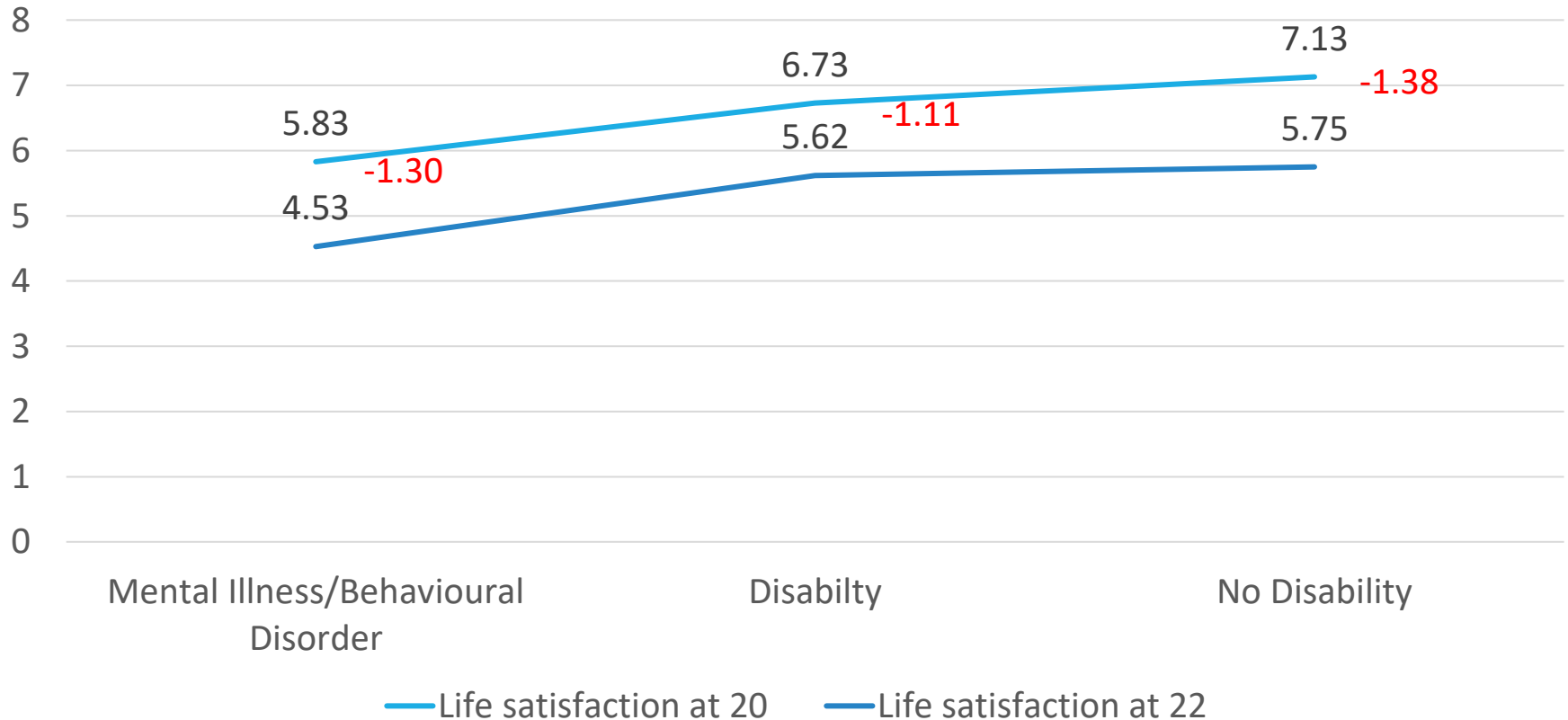


– ANOVA and post-hoc tests show that this difference is driven by those with a mental illness or behavioural disorder

- $F(2, 1973) = 21.421, p < .001$

Emotional Wellbeing – Longitudinal Life Satisfaction

Change in Life Satisfaction

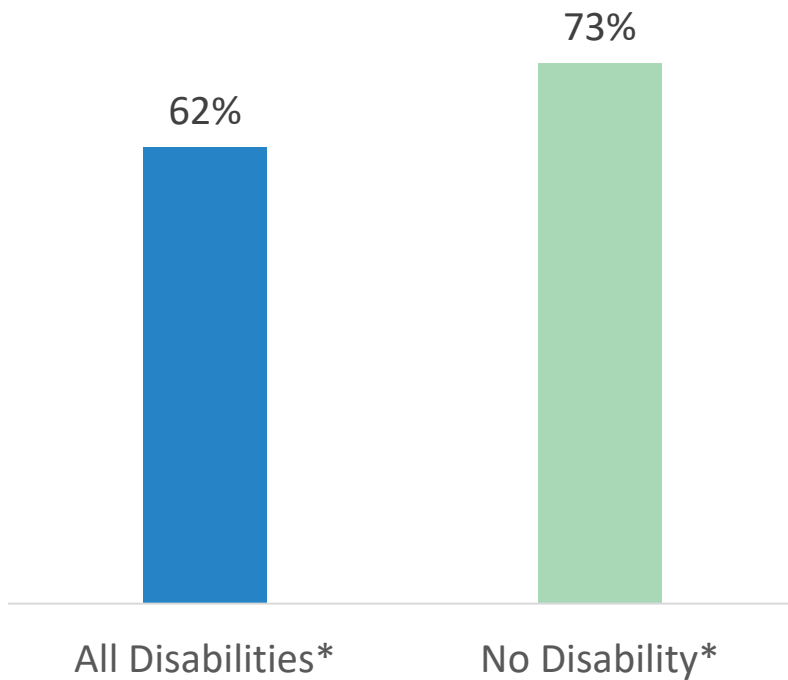


– Longitudinal decrease in life satisfaction across all three groups

- Reported in other studies of life satisfaction in emerging adults during COVID (Preetz et al., 2021)

Emotional Wellbeing – Optimism for the Future

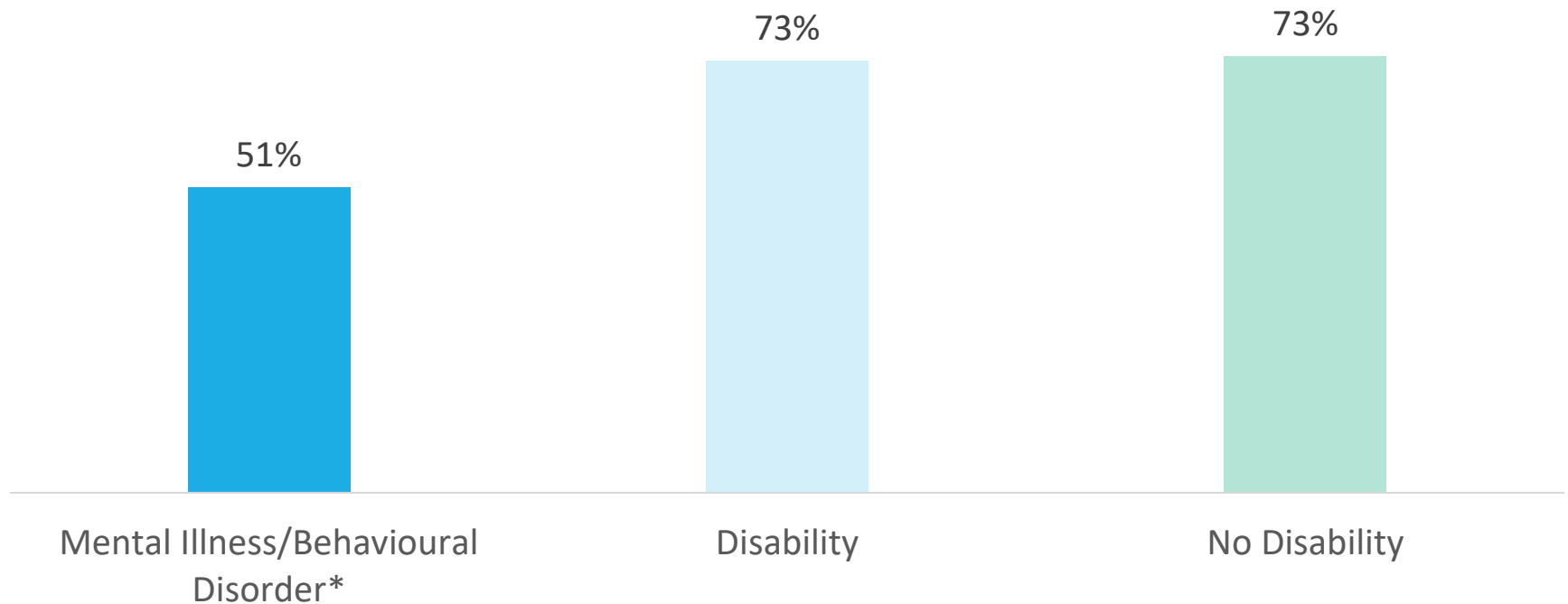
Optimism for the future



- Significantly less YAs with a disability agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am optimistic about my future”.

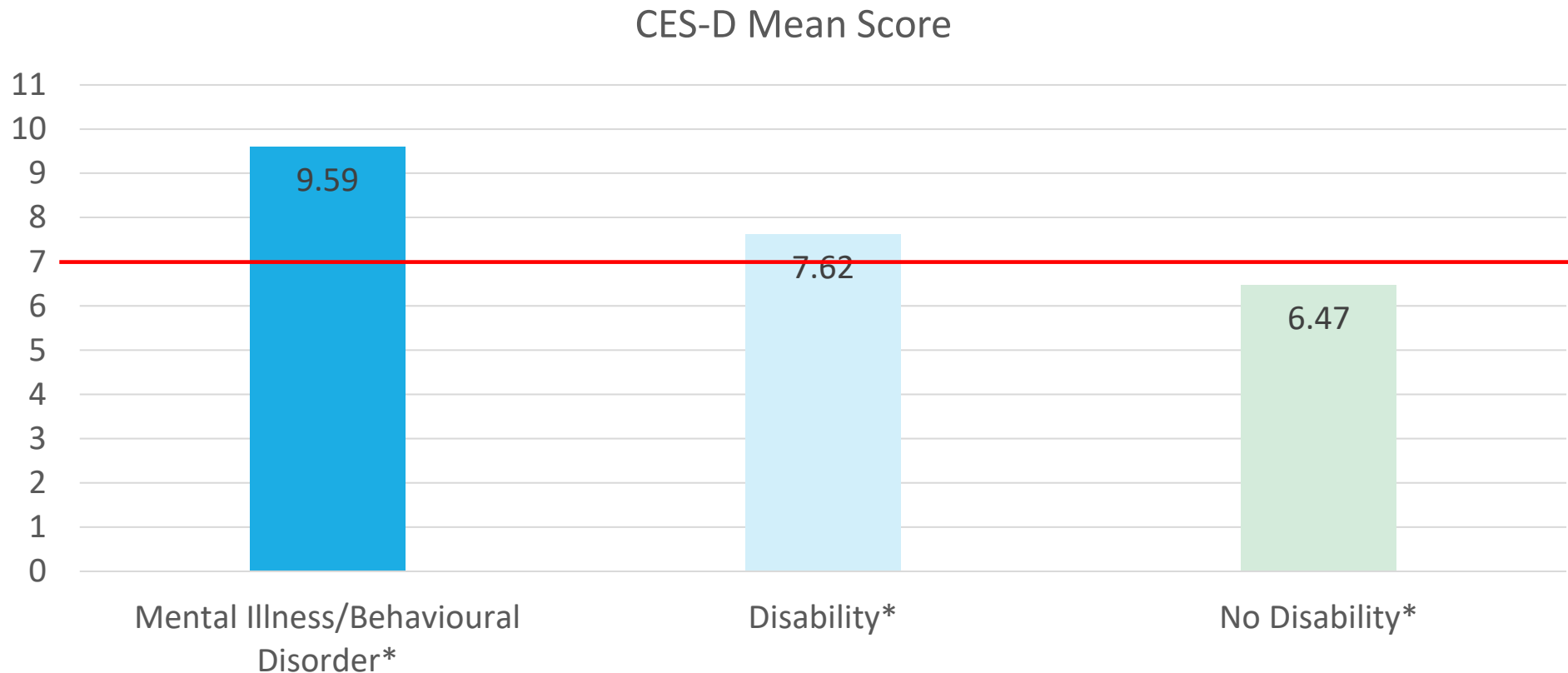
Emotional Wellbeing - Optimism for the Future

Optimistic for the future



- Again, this difference was driven by those reporting a mental illness.

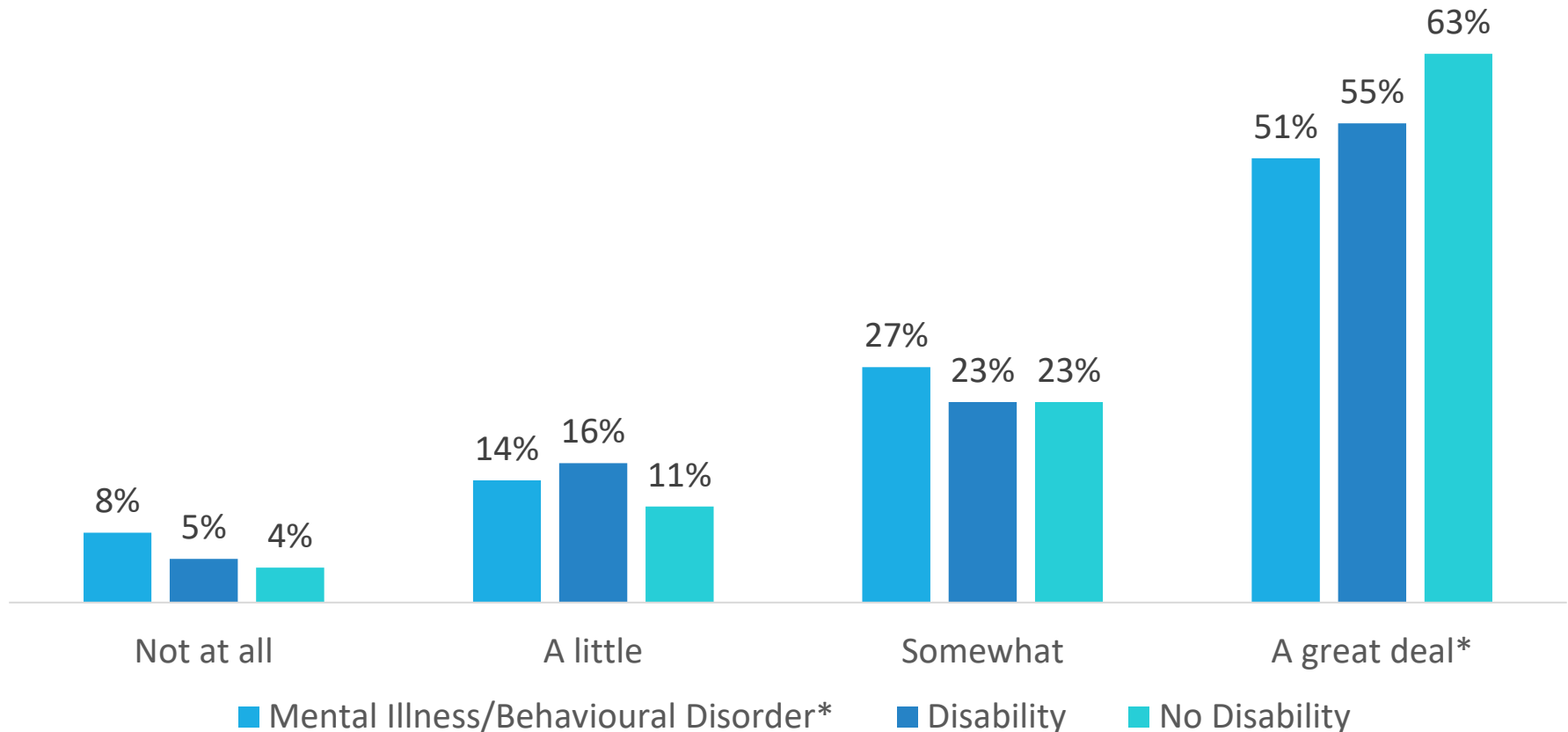
Emotional Wellbeing – CES-D 8 Scores



- A one way ANOVA revealed a significant difference in scores on the CES-D 8; $F(2, 1963) = 41.132, p < .001$
- Post-hoc analysis showed that there was a significant difference between all three groups

Emotional Wellbeing – Informal Support

Could Depend on People at Home to talk to about problems



- Lower than support if sick in bed
 - Still >75% could depend somewhat or a great deal across all groups

Conclusions

- YAs with disabilities showed poorer pandemic experiences across a range of areas, including
 - Increased vulnerability to severe COVID-19
 - Reduced access to medical and mental health services
- Those with a mental illness or behavioural disorder fared worse, reporting:
 - Lower life satisfaction and optimism for the future
 - Higher levels of depression
- However, those with a disability generally were confident in the support they would receive at home

Limitations

- Representativeness
 - Online survey, self-complete
 - Missed those without access to internet or with lower computer literacy (who may have had worse pandemic experiences)
 - Likely missed those with more severe impairments who would be unable to complete the survey without additional supports
- Not disability specific questionnaire
 - May have missed key areas of concern relevant to only those with a disability
- High variation between disabilities reported

Next Steps

- Preliminary Analysis
- Future research:
 - Focus on other domains affected by the pandemic, such as education, employment, and income
 - Look at more meaningful ways to group disability type
 - Examine differences by living arrangement
 - Potential for qualitative research to explore further areas of concern specific to YAs with a disability

References

- WHO (2020) – Disability Fact Sheet;
- Doyle (2021) - ‘All in this together?’ A commentary on the impact of COVID-19 on disability day services in Ireland
- CSO (2016) – National Census;
- Disability Federation of Ireland (2019) – Disability Profile: Ireland
- Banks, Grotti, Fahey, & Dorothy Watson (2018) - Disability and Discrimination in Ireland: Evidence from the QNHS Equality Modules
- Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on People with Disabilities
- Pettinicchio, D., Maroto, M., Chai, L., & Lukk, M. (2021). Findings from an online survey on the mental health effects of COVID-19 on Canadians with disabilities and chronic health conditions

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Thank you!

Acknowledgements

GUI Team

All participants of ***Growing Up in Ireland***

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