



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

Adam Nolan  
ESRI/GUI

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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

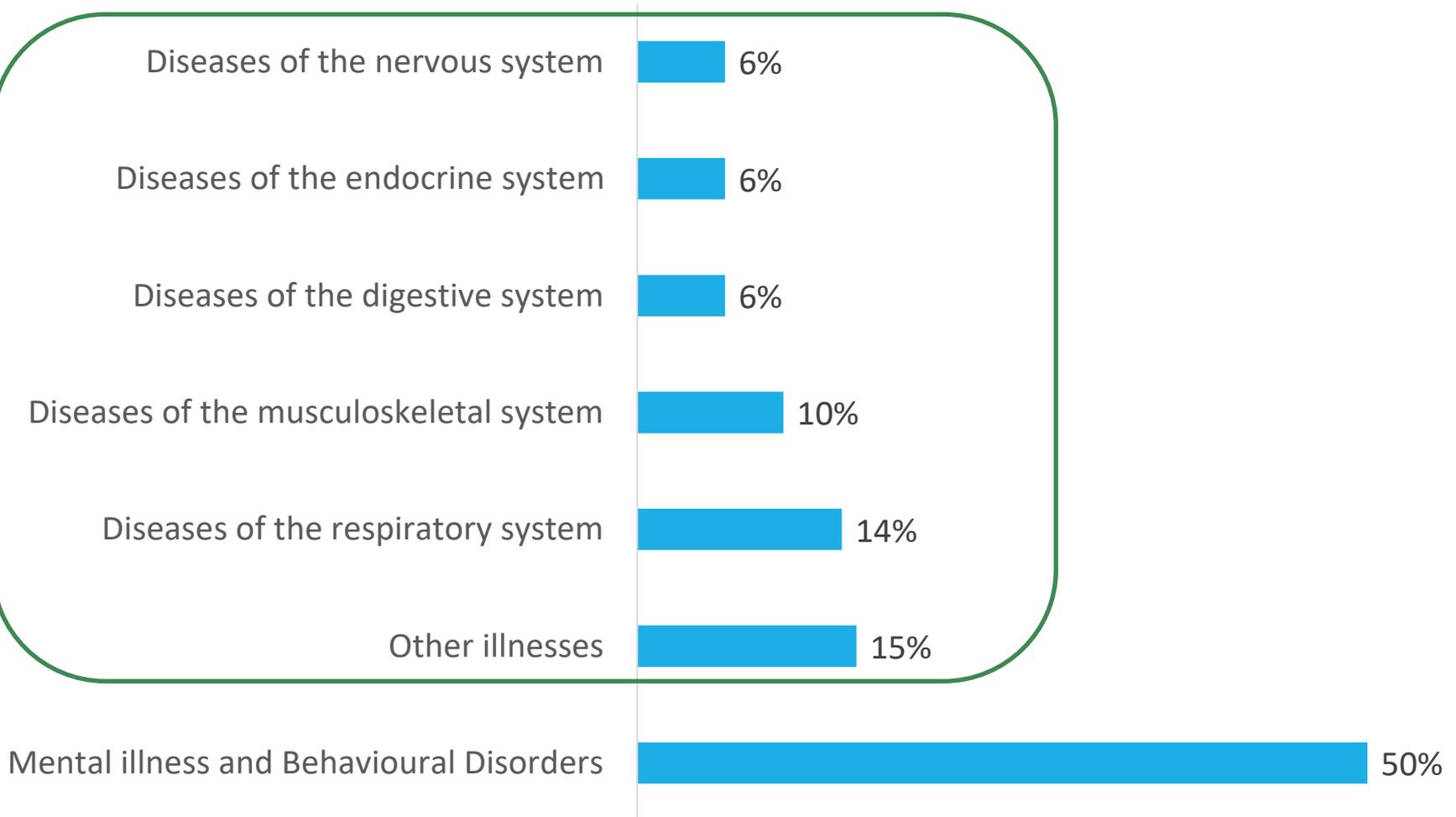
- N = 1, 979
  - Removed those who did not answer key variables in both the COVID survey and Wave 4
- 16.2% (n=320) reported a disability at Wave 4
- No significant difference between YAs with and without a disability in:
  - Family reported difficulty making ends meet at age 20
  - Income quintile at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

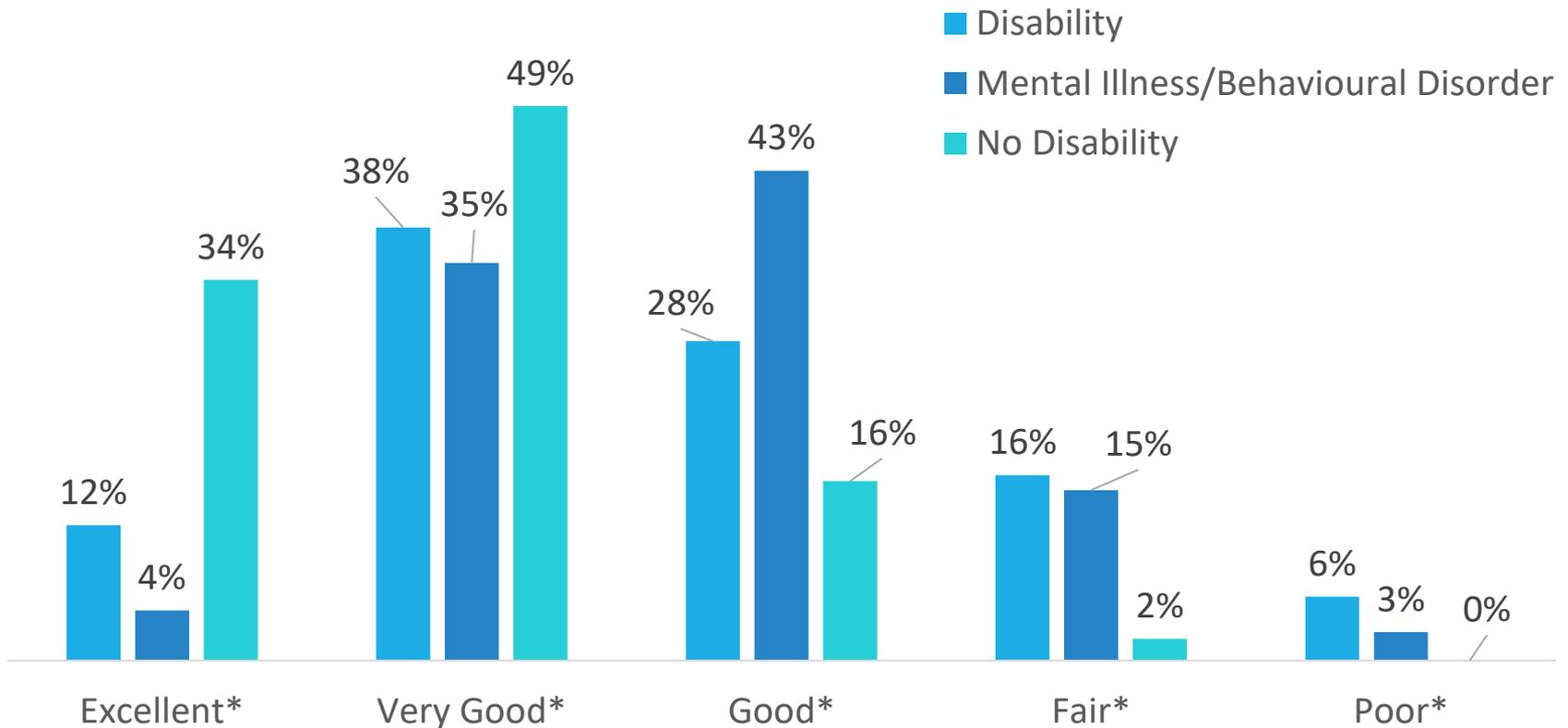
- Disability Type (Age 20) (n=320)



# Sample Background – Self Rated Health

- Health at age 20

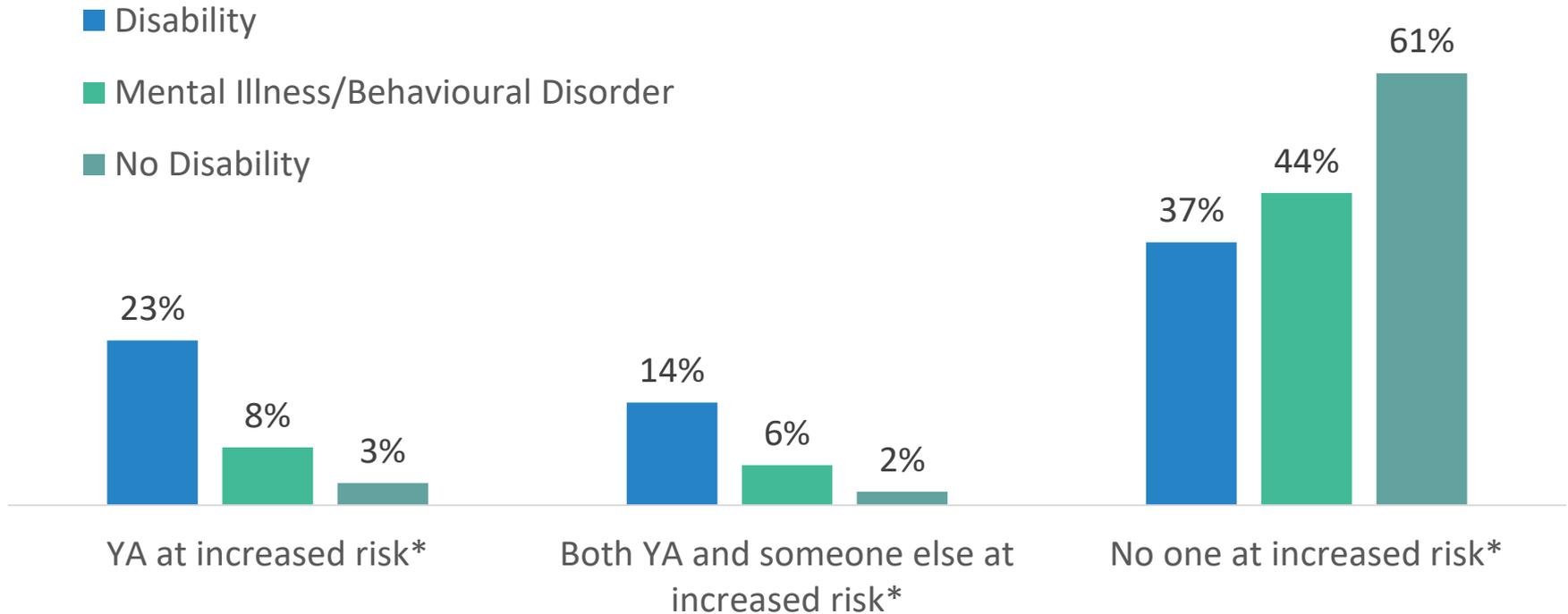
Self Rated Health at Age 20





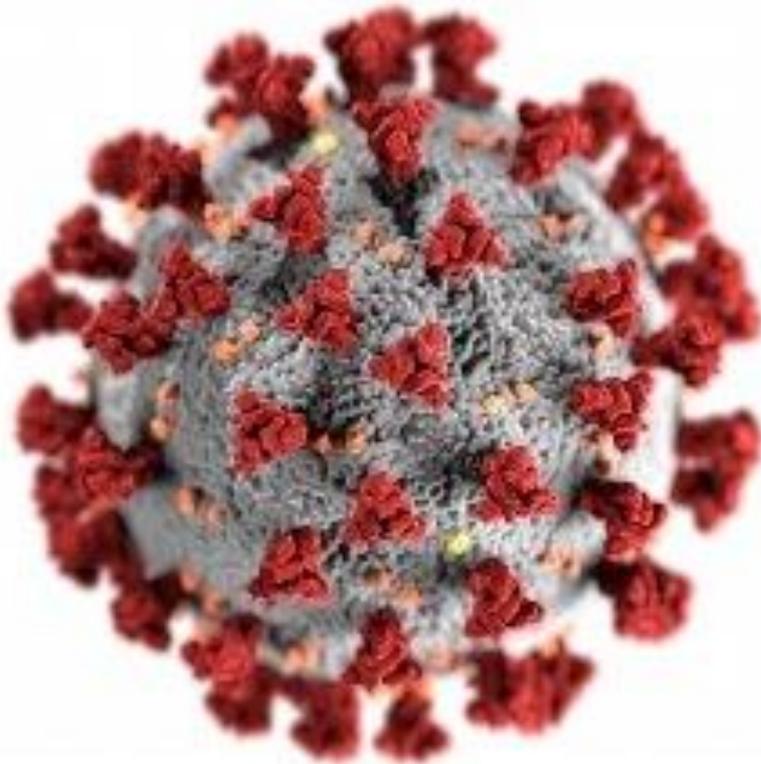
# Health - Vulnerability to COVID-19

## Increased Vulnerability to Severe COVID-19 Symptoms



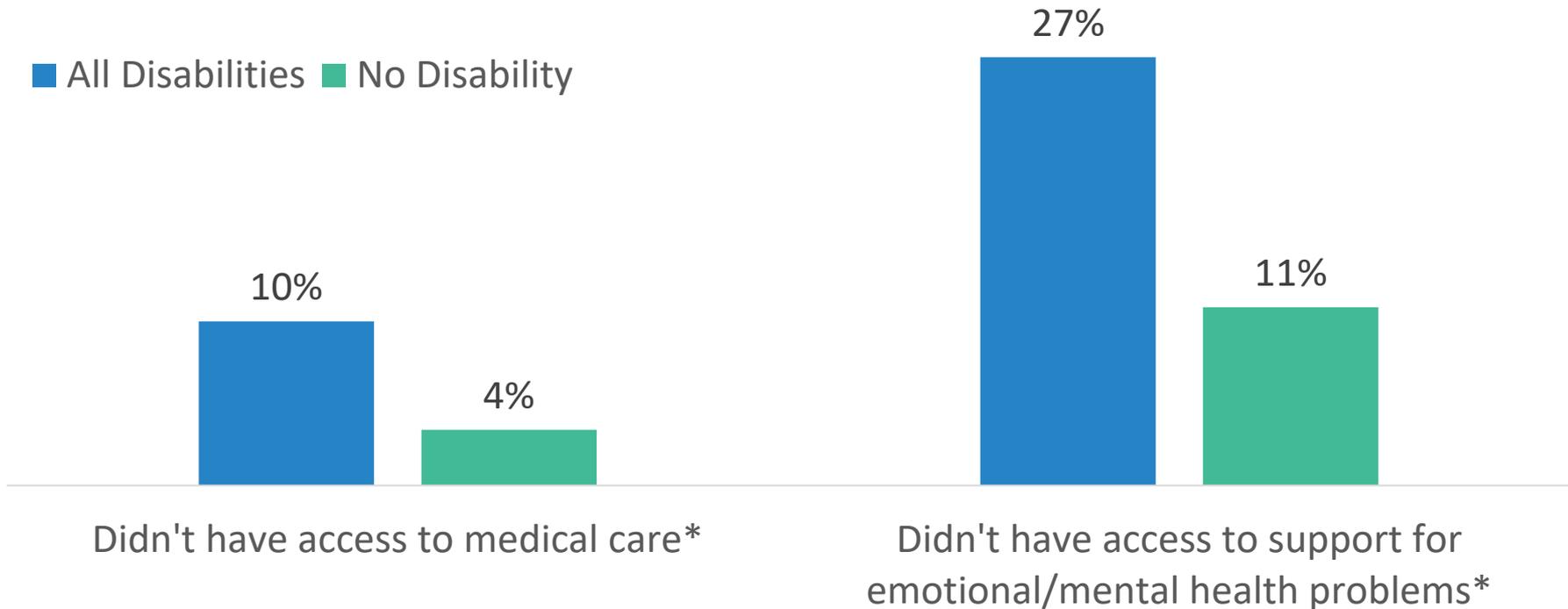
- Significantly more YAs with a disability at increased risk of developing severe COVID-19

# 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

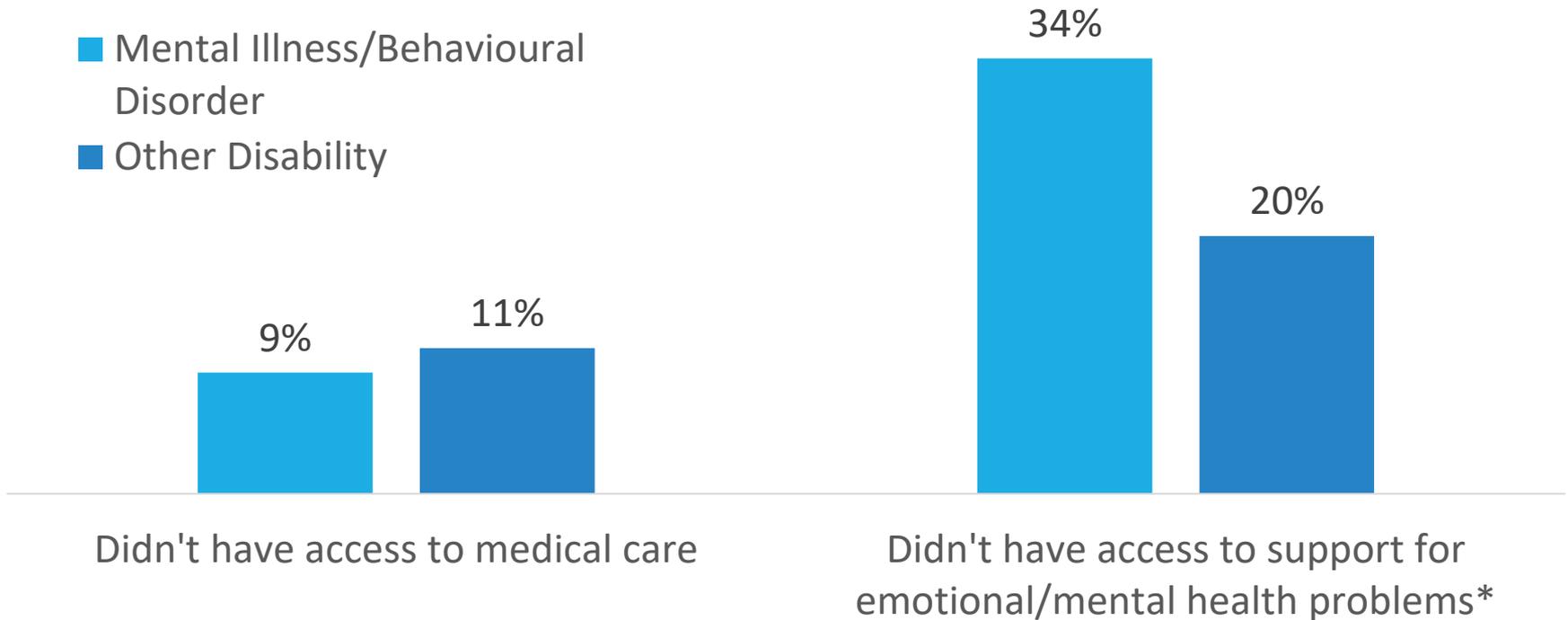
# Health – Access to Services



– 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

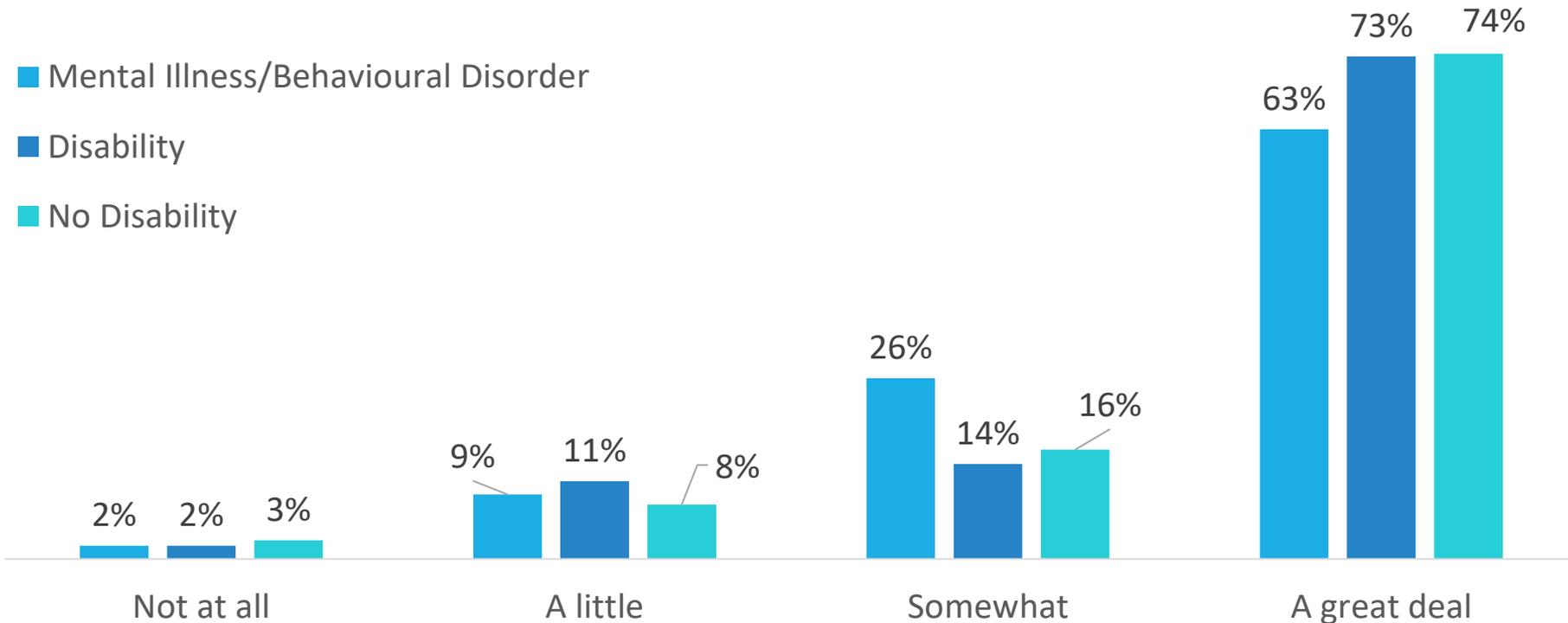
# Health – Access to Services by Disability Type



- 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

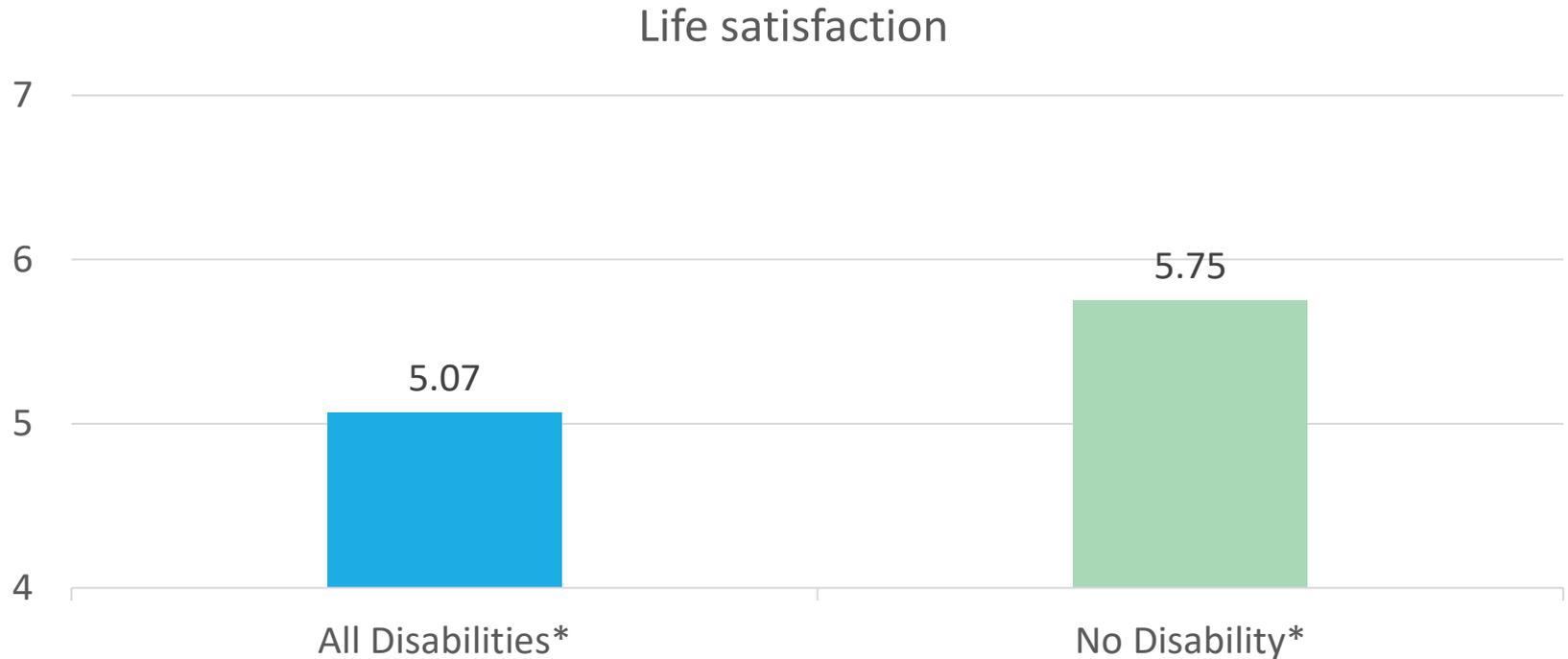


– Generally, YAs across all three groups reported being able to depend on the people around them if they were ill

# 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

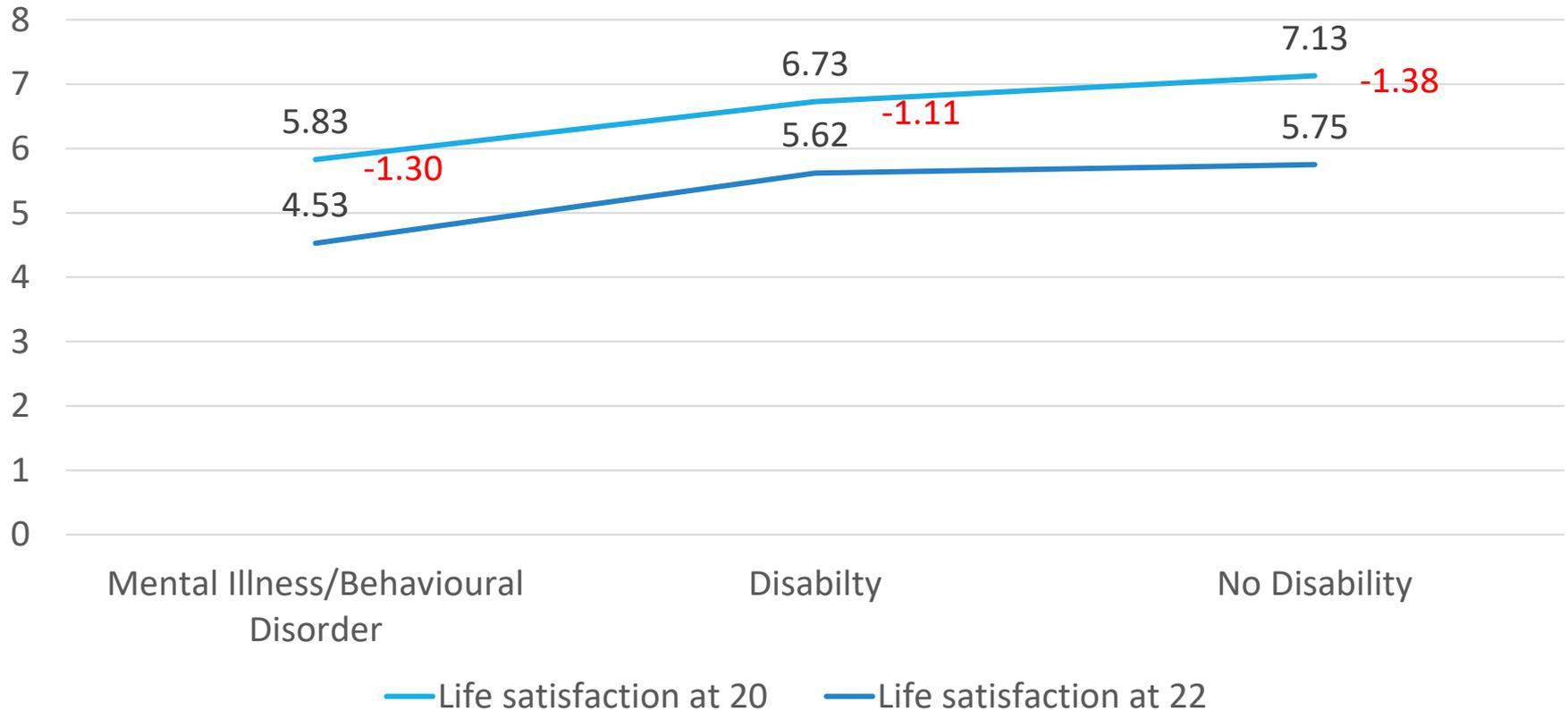


– ANOVA and post-hoc tests show that this difference is driven by those with a mental illness or behavioural disorder

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

# Emotional Wellbeing – Longitudinal Life Satisfaction

Change in Life Satisfaction

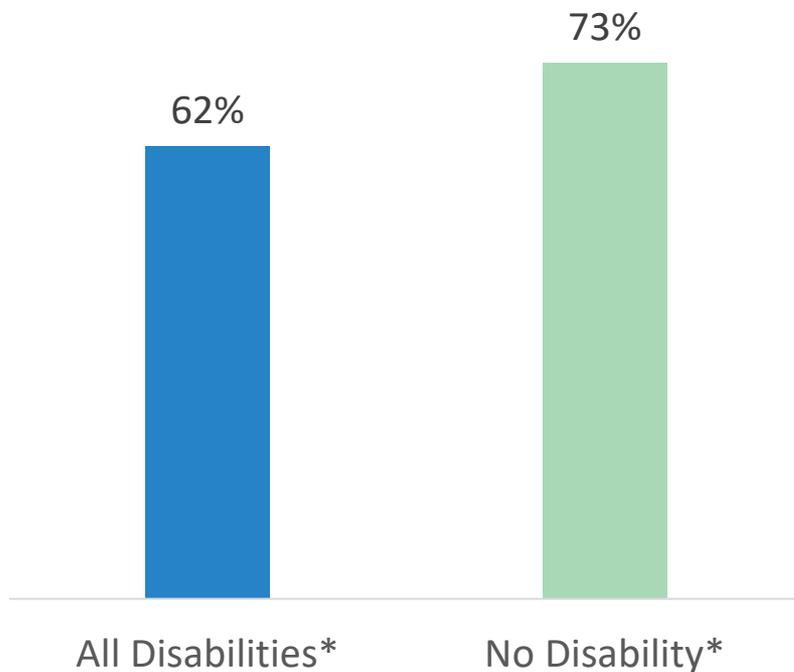


– Longitudinal decrease in life satisfaction across all three groups

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

# Emotional Wellbeing – Optimism for the Future

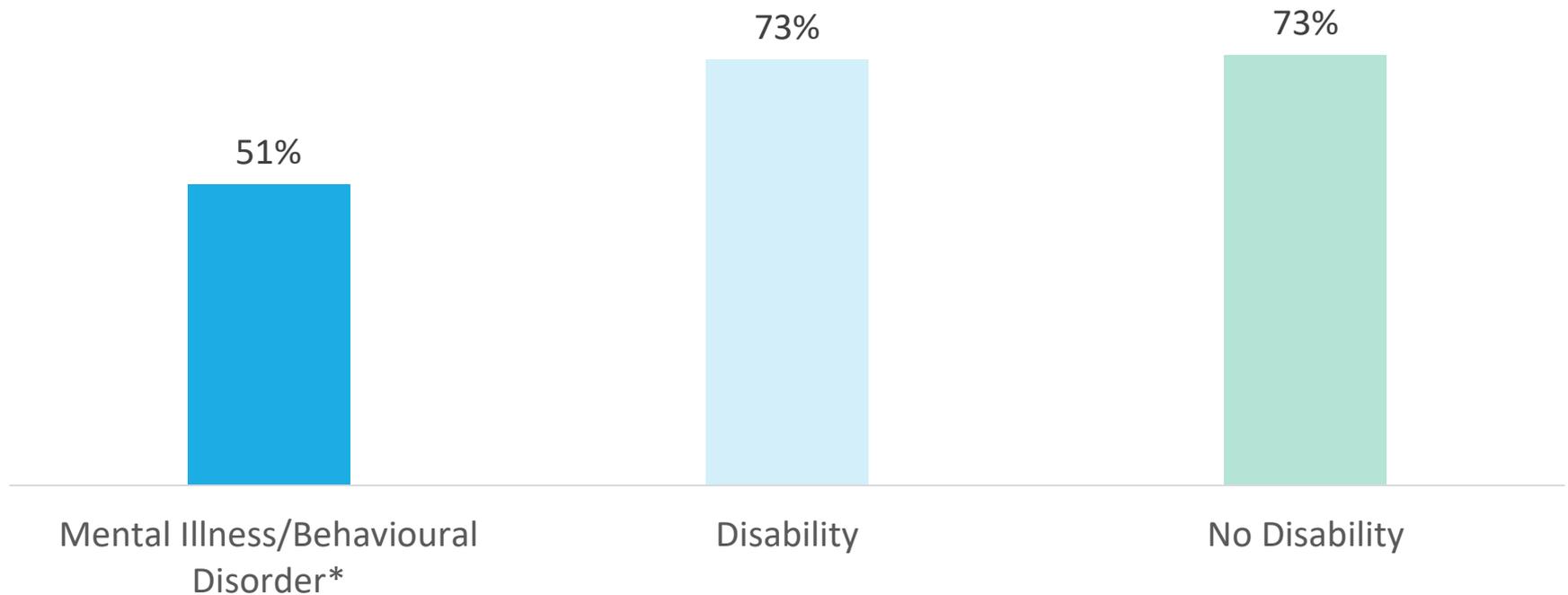
## Optimism for the future



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

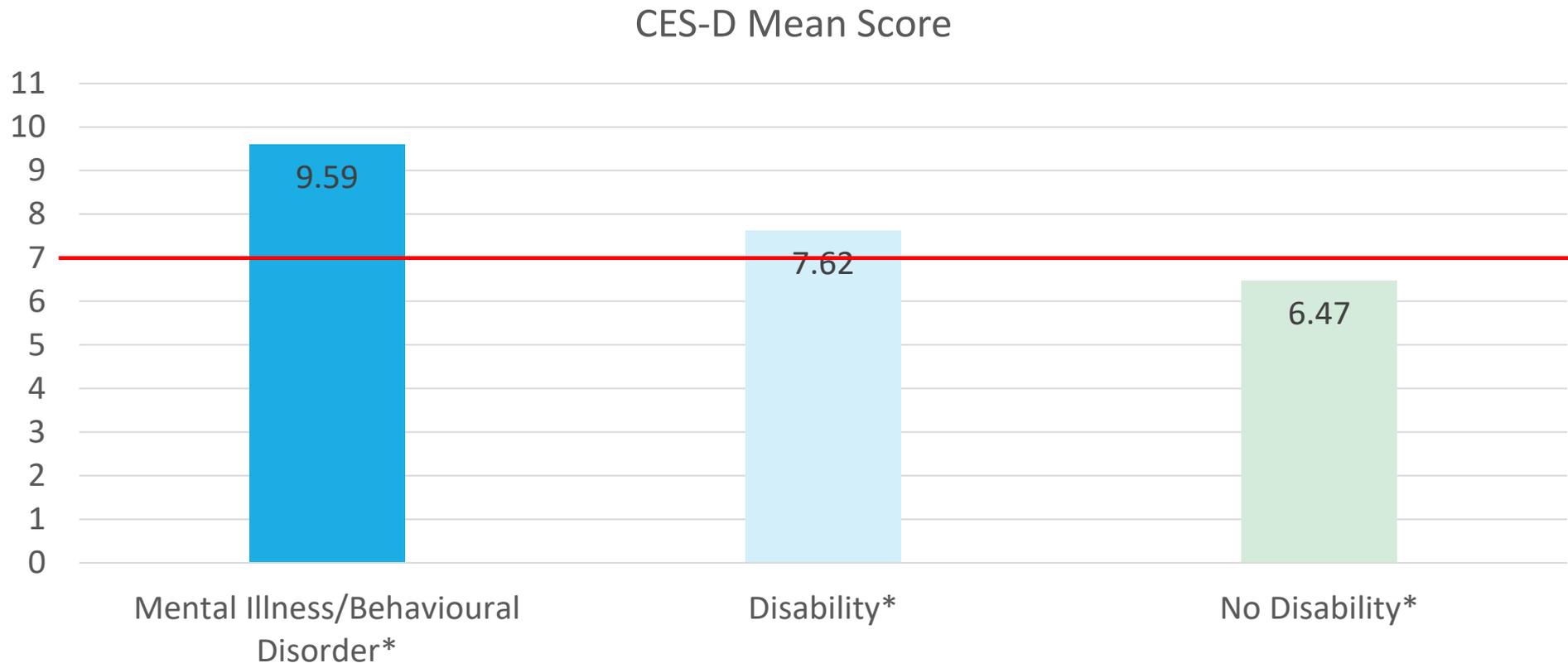
# Emotional Wellbeing - Optimism for the Future

Optimistic for the future



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

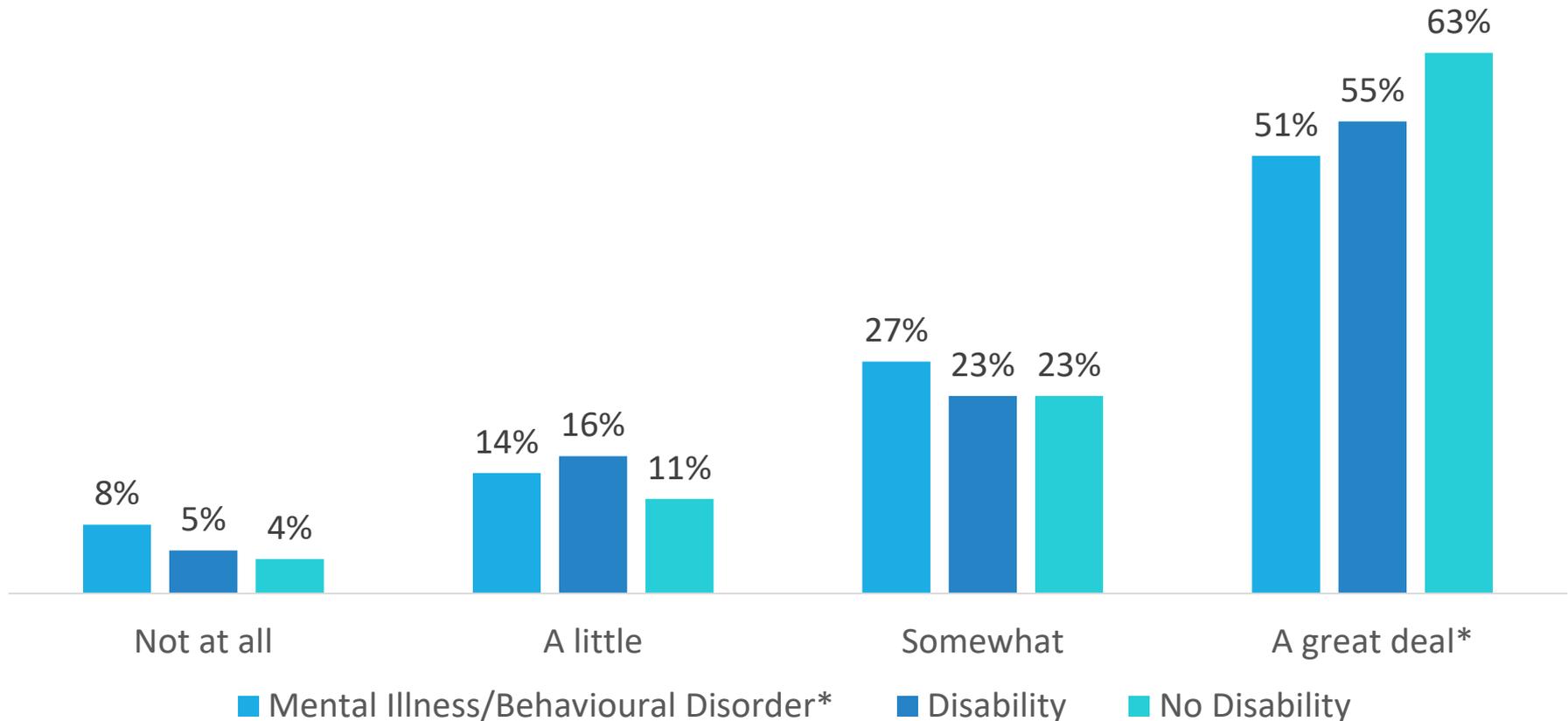
# Emotional Wellbeing – CES-D 8 Scores



- 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

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CSO

DCEDIY

## Contact Details

[Adam.Nolan@ESRI.ie](mailto:Adam.Nolan@ESRI.ie)



@AJ\_\_Nolan



<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2365-6195>