

MISSION AUSTRALIA

YOUTH SURVEY

2023



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We acknowledge the traditional custodians of lands throughout Australia, and we pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the culture and dreams of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continual relationship with the land and **we recognise the importance of the young people who are the future leaders.**

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CEO's message

As we celebrate the 22nd year of Mission Australia's *Youth Survey*, we are incredibly grateful for the 19,501 young people aged 15 to 19 in Australia who shared their thoughts, experiences, concerns and solutions to challenges this year. Our thanks also extend right across the country to the schools, groups and individuals who supported young people to participate in *Youth Survey 2023*. I hope Australia's young voices within this report are heard loud and clear nationwide and those voices guide actions to address the issues that matter for this generation.

As CEO of Mission Australia, a mum and someone with a long history in the education and community sector, I know our *Youth Survey* findings provide invaluable insights about Australia's young people. These insights are important for all those parenting and living alongside young people, teachers and school administrators, our sector colleagues, support service staff, businesses and decision-makers.

The crucial period when young people are moving into their adult years comes with a range of challenges, which are more marked for young people with vulnerabilities such as mental health concerns or homelessness. We know from this research that many young people had to deal with significant challenges and concerns in the last year. As we digest the 2023 findings, we also consider what is shaping young people's experiences, lives and perspectives more broadly including cost-of-living pressures, the housing emergency and the effects of climate change.

I am pleased to see this year's survey points to plenty of good news about young people. Most young people are studying or working, with the majority satisfied with their study progress and happy doing their job. They're involved in activities or groups and proud of their community.

As an organisation that works closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, Mission Australia is particularly interested in hearing from and understanding how young First Nations peoples are faring. This is especially important in this year of the Voice Referendum and as we see successive Closing the Gap reports showing limited progress on targets for improving the wellbeing of First Nations peoples. It's great to see that most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were involved in study or employment and had clear plans for their future, in particular going to university, seeking employment or travel. Most can identify sources of support, especially friends and family, and are involved in many activities within their community.

However, echoing *Youth Survey* results from previous years, I was concerned that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to rate their wellbeing lower than their non-Indigenous peers and were far more likely to experience unfair treatment or discrimination. This disparity and its persistence reminds us yet again of the urgent action that's needed to make our country a place where all young people can thrive. Mission Australia is committed to working as an ally alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and communities to serve the needs of First Nations young people, to provide a platform for their voices and to drive real social change - I encourage other organisations to do the same.

Each year we do this survey, young people show they're aware of and care about issues facing Australia. This year *the environment, equity and discrimination, the economy and financial matters* and *mental health* were the top four issues that young people considered most important in Australia today. What was different to last year was the increase in

young people highlighting the *economy and financial matters, housing and homelessness* (fifth place) and *crime, safety and violence* (sixth place) as important issues in Australia today. Their responses were given amidst Australia's severe weather disasters as well as public discussion and advocacy on climate change, mental health, the Voice Referendum and racism, rising living costs and the housing and homelessness crisis.

Discrimination and mental health were again noted as major concerns for many young people this year, both as a personal concern and also as a national problem they want Australia to address. One-quarter of respondents stated they had high levels of psychological distress and even more identified they were unfairly treated in the past year. Troublingly, one in 10 young people felt they had no control or almost no control over their life. And while half of Australia's young people feel positive about their futures, this positive outlook has declined since 2020 - a concerning trend. Another finding that deeply concerned me was that one-fifth of young people felt lonely most or all of the time.

We also know from our survey that young people are still experiencing a range of personal challenges and concerns. Consistent with 2022 responses, young people said their top personal challenges in 2023 related to *school, mental health* and *relationships*.

For the second time, our annual *Youth Survey* asked about and reported back on young people's recommended solutions to the issues they face. Most stated they need better access to mental healthcare services, accurate diagnosis and treatment, support from their family and friends and professional help. Young people also voiced they'd like greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels. One of the many comments that touched my heart was from a young woman who wrote about her struggles with mental illness while on a long waiting list getting help from psychologists.

Through our *Youth Survey*, young people have shown us time and time again that they care about issues facing Australia and themselves, are strong and resilient, diverse and very capable. They've made their major concerns and solutions crystal clear. I urge everyone reading this report to take these young voices and perspectives seriously, create space for all young people including First Nations young people to be genuinely included in decision-making processes, and act upon their ideas and recommendations.

Young people hold the key to a brighter future for all of us. We must ensure their voices are amplified, their needs properly met and they feel valued and supported, so they can carve their own path towards a better future for themselves and for all of Australia.

Sharon Callister
CEO, Mission Australia



2023 Youth Survey Overview

The *Youth Survey 2023* paints a picture of a diverse, resilient and capable group of young people who often experience significant pressures in multiple facets of life, but who can usually identify solutions or ways of coping. This study gives us insight into the current and future concerns of the next generation of Australian adults.

For the past 22 years, the Mission Australia *Youth Survey* has provided a platform for young people to share their goals, experiences and concerns during an important transitional point in their lives. The 19,501 young people aged 15-19 who completed the *Youth Survey 2023* each bring their own perspective, collectively painting a picture of how young people across Australia are faring and the issues that matter to them.

There are many results to celebrate from the *Youth Survey 2023*. There were high levels of involvement in study, with the majority of students satisfied with their progress. Many young people were employed, and two-thirds of those working were pleased with their job. Close to nine in ten were involved in activities or groups, and most young people were proud of their community.

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were involved in study or employment, and the vast majority had plans for the future including going to university, employment or travel. However, similarly to past years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people rated their wellbeing lower than their non-indigenous peers on a range of measures, and a greater proportion reported they were subject to unfair treatment or discrimination.

As in past years, young people showed awareness and thoughtfulness about issues facing the nation. Their unprompted responses when asked about the **most important issues** facing Australia today demonstrate their continuing concern for *the environment, equity and discrimination, the economy and financial matters* and *mental health*. Over the past year, we have seen greater levels of concern about issues relating to *the economy and financial matters, housing and homelessness* and *crime, safety and violence*.

Some national issues were more notable in certain states. For example, *housing and homelessness* was prominent among young Tasmanians, pointing to effects of the housing crisis in this state. *Crime, safety and violence* was the second highest issue in the Northern Territory, and over a third of young people in New South Wales mentioned *mental health* as an important national issue.

In the context of these national concerns, only half of young people felt positively about the future. In relation to various aspects of subjective wellbeing, young people were most unhappy about *what may happen to them later in life*. Similarly, when asked whether they felt they had control over their life, one in 10 felt they had *no control* or *almost no control* over their life.

In addition to their societal awareness, young people demonstrated great insight into the challenges they have personally faced this year as well as possible solutions to those challenges. The top **personal challenges** faced by young people were consistent with 2022, with the most common responses themed around *school, mental health* and *relationships*. While ranking highly in 2022, the *COVID-19* pandemic was not a top-of-mind challenge. Only 5% of 2023 respondents indicated they were *very or extremely concerned* about COVID-19, down from 19% in 2022 and 29% in 2021.

School challenges were mentioned unprompted by almost half of all respondents. These young people shared difficulties around their high workload, academic pressure, challenges with teachers and learning difficulties. This aligns with responses to a separate question asking about **personal concerns**, to which *coping with stress* and *school or study problems* were the most common answers. Young people suggested solutions to these challenges, including taking responsibility for more efficient study and better time management, greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels, and being more comfortable asking for support or advice when they need it.

Mental health continues to affect the lives of many young people. Close to one quarter of respondents mentioned issues including stress, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem as one of their greatest personal challenges in the last year. In addition, *mental health* was seen as the top barrier to achieving work and study goals. The levels of psychological distress, loneliness and general wellbeing, as measured in the *Youth Survey*, give further insight into young people's mental state. Males self-reported higher scores than females across the range of wellbeing questions, but self-assessment of wellbeing among females and especially gender diverse young people was worryingly low. Young people described helpful solutions to their mental health challenges, including better access to mental healthcare services, proper diagnosis and treatment and support from their family and friends.

Around one in five respondents cited relationship challenges, with the most common being issues with family and friends. Additionally, three in 10 young people said they find it hard to turn to friends or family if they need help and one quarter said their family's ability to get along was only *fair or poor*. Young people's solutions to their relationship challenges included asking others close to them for more support, understanding or advice, with the desire for a more diverse support network and professional help also featuring.

The *Youth Survey 2023* findings reveal that young people are diverse, resilient and capable - often experiencing significant pressures in multiple facets of life, but usually able to identify solutions or ways of coping. Many are concerned about the future, but also have more immediate challenges in their lives. Young people took the opportunity of this platform to openly share their perspectives and the findings remind us of the importance of listening to this next generation of Australian adults.



MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

 **19,501** YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15-19 YEARS PARTICIPATED IN THE YOUTH SURVEY

1 

The environment

44% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 51% in 2022 and 38% in 2021.

21% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about climate change.

In the past year I have struggled with anxiety regarding my future, and climate change.

Female, 17, TAS

2 

Equity and discrimination

31% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 36% in 2022 and 35% in 2021.

27% of young people were treated unfairly or discriminated against in the last year, most commonly due to: Physical appearance, Race/cultural background, Gender.

I have experienced a lot of prejudice and discrimination based on my gender, especially around school interactive environments.

Female, 16, NSW

3 

The economy and financial matters

31% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 22% in 2022 and 11% in 2021.

15% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about financial security.

Financial difficulties - the cost of food and petrol has meant that I have to work more and focus less on school.

Female, 18, NSW

4 

Mental health

30% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 34% in 2022 and 35% in 2021.

32% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about mental health.

My mental health has probably been the biggest challenge for me in the last year. I have been struggling with feeling down, stressed and overwhelmed.

Male, 17, NSW

Homelessness and housing was the 5th most important issue in Australia for 2023 at 19%, up from 12% in 2022 and 7% in 2021.

Crime, safety and violence was the 6th most important issue in Australia for 2023 at 18%, up from 10% in 2022 and 11% in 2021.



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In young peoples' own words

Young people told us in their own words and unprompted, what their **biggest personal challenge** has been in the past year, what they found helpful in dealing with that challenge and what more could be done to help them address their challenge. The key themes of young people's responses are shown below.

1 in 3 young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what could help with their challenges, indicating there is an opportunity to improve awareness of supports available to them.

THE BIGGEST PERSONAL CHALLENGES

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP? Solutions suggested by young people

49%



SCHOOL CHALLENGES

High workload, academic pressure, challenges with teachers or learning difficulties.



- Be comfortable asking for support or advice
- Study harder and more effectively
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Be more organised and manage time effectively

24%



MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, diagnosed disorders or self-harm



- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Be comfortable asking for support or advice
- Better access to mental healthcare services
- Proper diagnosis and treatment

21%



RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

Challenging relationships with family, friends or significant others like lack of support, abuse or death



- Be comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Asking those closest to me for advice and understanding
- Better access to mental healthcare services





86%
studying full-time

63%
of students were **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with their studies

47%
of students were **very or extremely confident** in their ability to achieve study or work goals

37%
of students said there are **barriers to achieving study or work goals**

TOP 3 BARRIERS:

- Mental Health**
- Academic ability**
- Financial difficulty**

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP YOUNG PEOPLE ADDRESS SCHOOL RELATED CHALLENGES?

Being comfortable asking for support or advice

I could ask friends or family for support and to help ensure I stay focused on my tasks instead of getting distracted.

Female, 15, NT

I need to study harder and more effectively

I need to concentrate harder on my studies, I want to do the fun things but knowing me it'll just divert my attention away from what's actually important and the reason why I am in school in the first place and that is to get good grades and a good life in the future.

Male 17, QLD

More understanding from my teachers about stress levels

Perhaps speaking in confidence to the teachers who are constantly putting pressure on me even when I'm experiencing mental health issues would help address my specific challenge because it would give them an understanding of what I'm going through and, hopefully, stop them from making my schooling much more difficult.

Female 17, SA

Helping my parents understand the challenges I face at school

Communicating my hardships with my parents so they know if I am struggling in school and need their understanding that I need to vent to them without them trying to find solutions for me or completely dismiss my hardships and perceive me struggling as me outright failing [sic].

Female, 16, SA

Be more organised and get help managing my time

More help in school - assisting me in managing the tasks I need to complete to reduce last minute stress etc.

Female, 17, NSW



MENTAL HEALTH



38%

Were extremely or very concerned about **coping with stress**

38%

reported their mental health and wellbeing as **fair or poor**

25%

had **high psychological distress**

21%

felt **lonely** all or most of the time

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP YOUNG PEOPLE ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES?



Asking healthcare professionals for help

Seeking professional help for my mental health problems and getting proper diagnose [sic] for my mental health issues in order to better receive the help I need.

Gender diverse, 16, WA

Being properly diagnosed and given treatment

I could have started therapy and medication sooner so that my ADHD didn't lead to my anxiety and depression.

Female, 18, NSW

Being comfortable asking for support or advice

I believe that if I felt more comfortable opening up to my support team about my struggles then I could get better help. I worry that they will not validate my emotions or brush over something that may be a bigger deal to me than they thought.

Female, 16, QLD

Talking through my concerns with family and friends

Ongoing conversation with family and friends, making sure to stay on top of my personal experiences and feelings surrounding motivation and depression.

Female, 16, VIC

Better access to and availability of mental health services

I need to be in therapy. Mental health resources like therapy are not easily assessable [sic] in Australia. Since January of this year, my mum has been trying to book me in to see a therapist/psychologist. But due to the fact that there are no open spots anywhere that fit my needs, and I am not in danger (not suicidal) we have been unsuccessful. I believe I would really benefit from seeing a therapist, so I could have some professional help dealing with my mental health.

Female, 16, QLD

RELATIONSHIPS

Family's ability to get along:

29% found it hard to **turn to friends and family** when they needed help

25% said their family's ability to get along was **fair or poor**

Community:

60% agree or strongly agree that **I am proud to be a part of my community**

63% agree or strongly agree that **my community has the things I need to have a positive and thriving future**

88% are involved in **activities or groups in their communities**

TOP 3 SOURCES OF SUPPORT:



Friends



Parent/s or guardians



Relative/family friend

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP YOUNG PEOPLE ADDRESS RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES?

Being comfortable asking for support or advice

Being more open about my personal issues, asking for help and support when I need it, accepting support when it is offered.

Gender diverse, 15, NSW

Talking through my concerns with family and friends

Friends being able to talk it out and not bottle stuff up. Instead of joking all the time, we're able to talk.

Male, 15, QLD

Better access to and availability of mental health services

I think more mental health support for teenagers that is easily accessible and guarantees confidentiality as well as guidance and tips for how to support friends with their mental health.

Female, 16, NSW

Asking healthcare professionals for help

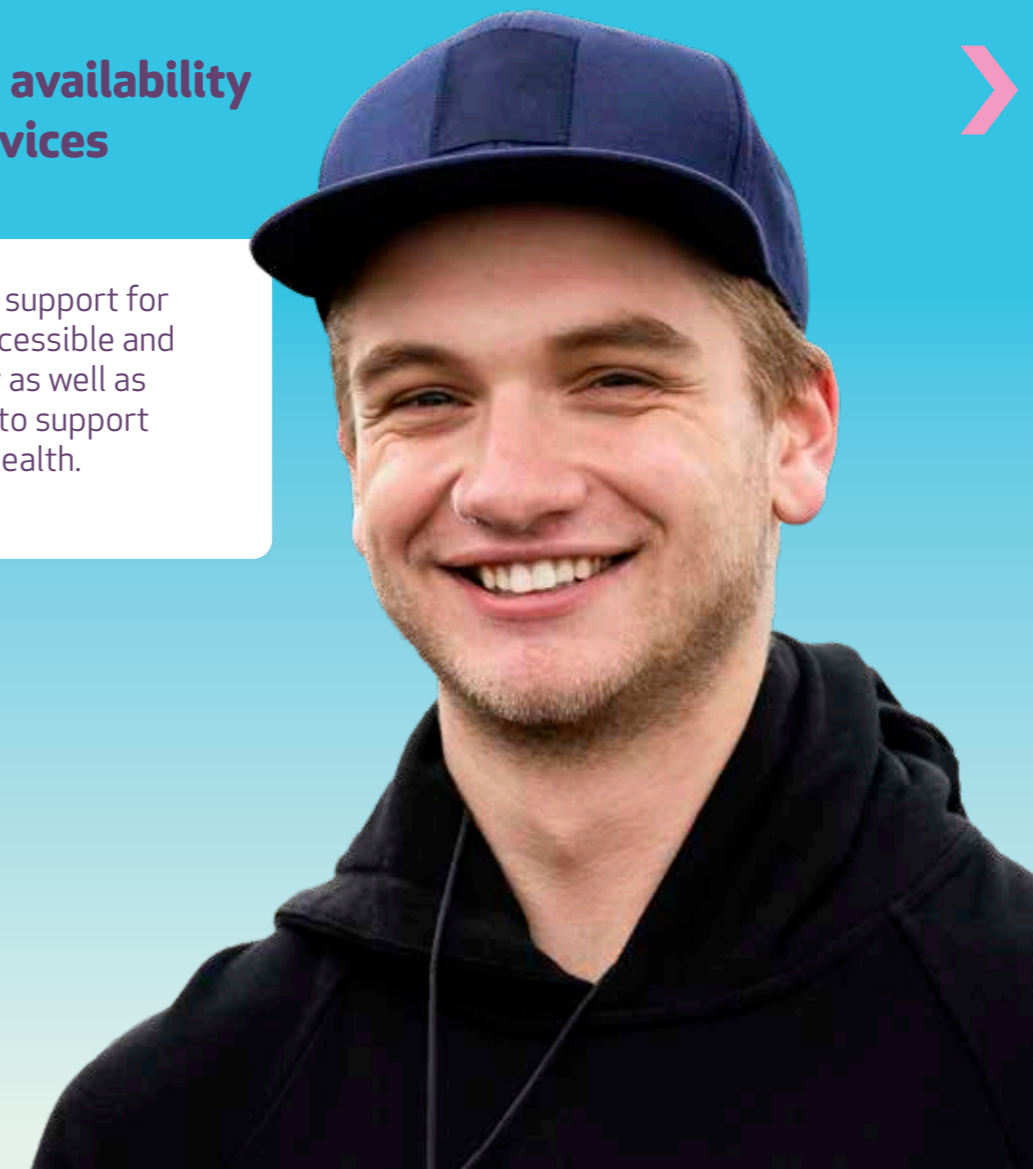
I could get professional help but a part of me doesn't want to ask for help as it feels a bit too much work and I don't want too much attention on my personal problems.

Female, 15, NT

More understanding from those closest to me

More support. I felt like none of my friends understood my situation. I feel like no one talks about the anxiety and stuff that comes with a breakup.

Female, 18, SA





National

- ▶ Profile of respondents
- ▶ Personal challenges and concerns
- ▶ National concerns
- ▶ Education and employment
- ▶ Wellbeing
- ▶ Support and Connectedness
- ▶ Unfair treatment and discrimination



National summary

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

State and territory distribution

The Mission Australia 2023 Youth Survey was completed by 19,501 young people aged 15-19 years from across the country. Figure 1.1 shows the number and proportion of responses from each state and territory.

Locality

Over three in five (62.7%) respondents lived in postcodes that were part of a major city as defined by the *Australian Statistical Geography Standard* (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). One quarter (24.7%) resided in regional areas and the remaining 12.7% lived in postcodes classified as both a major city and a regional area.

Gender

Over half (54.9%) of respondents were female, two in five (40.2%) were male, 3.7% were gender diverse and 1.3% preferred not to say.

Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

A total of 820 (4.4%) young people identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Among this group, 661 (3.5%) respondents identified as Aboriginal, 71 (0.4%) identified as Torres Strait Islander and the remaining 88 (0.5%) identified as both.

Cultural and ethnic identity

One in five (21.6%) respondents said that they strongly identify with a cultural or ethnic group. The most common (in order of frequency) were Indian, Chinese, Italian, Greek and Filipino. A similar proportion (22.1%) said they spoke a language other than English at home. The most common (in order of frequency) were Chinese/Mandarin, Arabic, Chinese/Cantonese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Hindi and Greek.

Disability

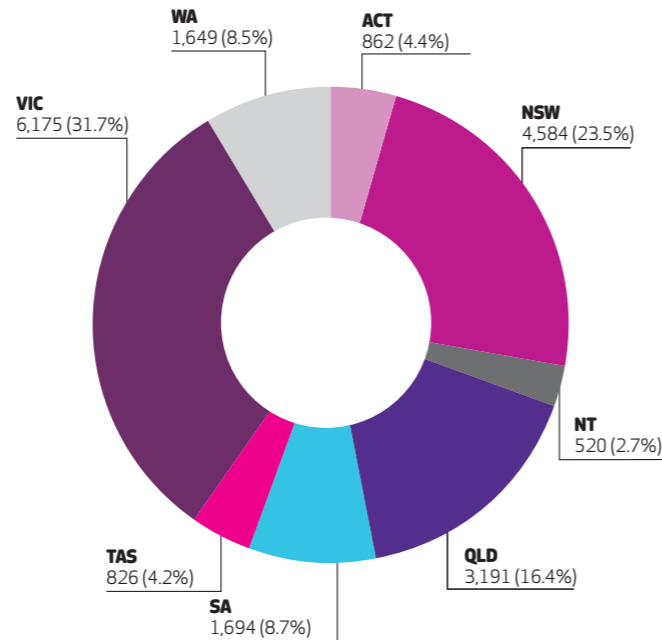
A total of 1,352 (7.3%) young people identified as a person with disability, with another 759 (4.1%) preferring not to say. Over one third (34.2%) of gender diverse respondents identified as living with disability compared with 5.8% of females and 6.9% of males. The most frequently cited disabilities (in order of frequency) were attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and dyslexia.

Mental health

There were 3,232 (17.4%) respondents who identified as a person with a mental health condition and 2,174 (11.7%) who preferred not to say. The proportions varied by gender; almost half (48.6%) of gender diverse young people identified as living with a mental health condition compared with 21.4% of females and 8.9% of males. The most frequently cited mental health conditions (in order of frequency) were anxiety disorders, depressive disorders and neurodevelopmental disorders which include ASD and ADHD.



Figure 1.1: Proportion of respondents by state/territory



PERSONAL CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

What was the biggest personal challenge experienced by young people?

Respondents were asked an unprompted, open-ended question about the biggest personal challenge they have faced or experienced in the last year. The young people responded in their own words with the themes of their responses displayed in Table 2.1 (page 15).

The most common personal challenges cited by young people were in the areas of school (49.0%), mental health (24.2%) and interpersonal relationships (21.3%).

Gender differences

- School related challenges were the most common among both females (54.0%) and males (44.3%). For gender diverse young people, mental health was the most frequently stated challenge (38.6%), followed by school related challenges (35.2%).
- Females were more likely than males to say they experienced any of the top three challenges, (school, mental health or relationships), while a higher proportion of males than females said they were unsure or did not have any challenges (8.8% of males compared with 3.6% of females).

What did young people find helpful in dealing with their personal challenge?

Once respondents had been asked about their greatest personal challenge in the past year, they were then asked to share what they had found helpful in dealing with their personal challenge.

Regardless of whether young people cited school, mental health or relationship challenges, the most frequently mentioned helpful action young people took was turning to their networks, most commonly friends and family, for support and guidance. They also relied on forms of entertainment and recreation for dealing with their challenges such as physical activities, music, social media and reading.

Gender differences

- Males, females and gender diverse young people most frequently cited their informal networks, particularly their friends, as helpful sources of support.
- Regardless of the type of challenge, a larger proportion of females than males mentioned that they found support from their teachers or professional supports, while a larger proportion of males than females mentioned the positive benefits of physical activity. Meanwhile, a higher proportion of gender diverse young people than females and males reported that nothing helped.

What more could have been done to help young people face their personal challenge?

After sharing what they found helpful in dealing with their personal challenge, respondents were asked what more could be done to help them address their personal challenge. These unprompted responses in the young peoples' own words are useful for understanding young peoples' perspectives on the solutions to their challenges.

Despite taking various actions to manage their personal challenge, young people still felt there was more that could have been done to help them. They suggested additional understanding, guidance and support from their schools, friends and family. Some expressed motivation to take action, such as getting more organised and asking healthcare professionals for help. Meanwhile, one in three young people were unsure about how best to tackle their challenge.

Gender differences

- Even with their current high use of school-based supports to face their personal challenges, females would have liked more school-based solutions. Males, on the other hand, were more inclined to say they were unsure about how to tackle their challenge.
- A higher proportion of gender diverse young people than females and males wanted more professional help to assist them face their personal challenge.

Exploring the top three personal challenges

My biggest challenge was related to school

Among those who reported school related challenges, one quarter (23.5%) mentioned issues that involved dealing with their workload, balancing school and other commitments, and managing their time effectively. One in ten (9.5%) school challenges were around feeling pressure to achieve good grades. Smaller proportions mentioned challenges with teachers/school staff or learning difficulties. Most of the school challenges were general in nature (85.8%), including worries about completing school, getting through a particular year (e.g. year 10), attending school and non-specific mentions of 'school' or 'study'.

"...Assessments in the past term have not been especially difficult, but there have been so many in a short time span, it's hard to study for the tests, complete research, write essays and so much more. Time management has been a bit of a struggle - there have been so many weeks where the only thing I do when I get home is shower and study, with no down time..." Female, 15, NSW

How I helped myself

Young people reported that their friends and family helped them through their school challenges. They also focused on their studies and leant on their teachers for guidance and support.

"I think one of the most important things that helps me is asking help from my teachers, to understand certain complex topics in which I struggle. They provide information to make me understand it. Also trying to limit my phone addiction because I do tend to procrastinate in certain ways while I am doing my work or homework at school or either at home." Female, 17, ACT

What more could have helped me

While teachers were often mentioned as being helpful for respondents' personal challenges, many felt that adjustments to the school system were still needed. They wanted teachers to be more understanding of their academic stress and their competing priorities outside of school. Young people recognised that they could manage their school challenges by improving the way they studied and/or being more organised. Some respondents noted that they needed to be more open to seeking support from others, while others wanted their parents to understand the struggles they faced at school.

Being comfortable asking for support or advice

"Talk to someone about the challenges and get advice on how to handle schoolwork." Female, 16, TAS

I need to study harder and more effectively

"To further assist with the balancing of schoolwork, I could time-block study sessions and set small goals to achieve to maximise my productivity. Additionally undertaking relaxation techniques like meditation and yoga can increase the likelihood of deep sleep and relaxation." Female, 18, SA

More understanding from my teachers about stress levels

"Teachers and staff being more supportive and understanding of the pressures and work load we undertake." Male, 16, QLD

Be more organised and get help managing my time

"Set a timetable for when you will complete work and extra study that I could stick with and be organised and get stuff done." Male, 15, VIC

Helping my parents understand the challenges I face at school

"I think a lot of other people experience this and that parents should understand that we don't live in their era and that not everything is the same as what they experienced." Female, 16, NSW

My biggest challenge was related to mental health

Of the respondents who reported mental health challenges, one quarter (26.2%) were related to stress, which included academic stress, burnout and feeling overwhelmed. Close to one in five (17.2%) mentioned anxiety or panic attacks, while 8.9% noted challenges with depression and 8.3% spoke about self-esteem or body image issues. Concerningly, suicide and/or self-harm was mentioned by 3.4% of young people as their mental health challenge. General mental health challenges (49.4%) included non-specific mentions of 'mental health' or 'poor mental health'.

"Mental health was my biggest personal challenge. I suffered through multiple depressive episodes and struggled with anxiety. This made it very difficult for me to focus on school or friendships." Female, 16, VIC

How I helped myself

Many young people said they turned to their friends and family to help them with their mental health challenges. They also listened to music or did physical activity when they were struggling with mental health issues.

"Going to the gym and exercising. Playing football and going out bush for hunting, fishing and camping out on country." Male, 17, NT

What more could have helped me

Young people who had not yet opened up to anyone about their mental health concerns wanted to reach out to someone about how they are feeling so they could get the necessary support. Some wanted better access to mental health services and healthcare professionals to receive an appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Meanwhile, others wished that their family and friends would understand their mental health struggles.

Being more comfortable asking for support or advice

"Be more open to talk to people close to me about my problems, as if I talk to the right people it will make me feel more free instead of feeling worried about what they will think." Male, 16, QLD

Asking healthcare professionals for help

"I would have liked to have a therapist/psychologist to talk to but I would feel embarrassed asking my parents to let me see one and I know that I shouldn't feel that way but I still do. Just having an adult to talk to that isn't necessarily apart [sic] of my life in any other way would have been helpful I think because I wouldn't feel like I was being judged!" Female, 18, QLD

Better access to and availability of mental health services

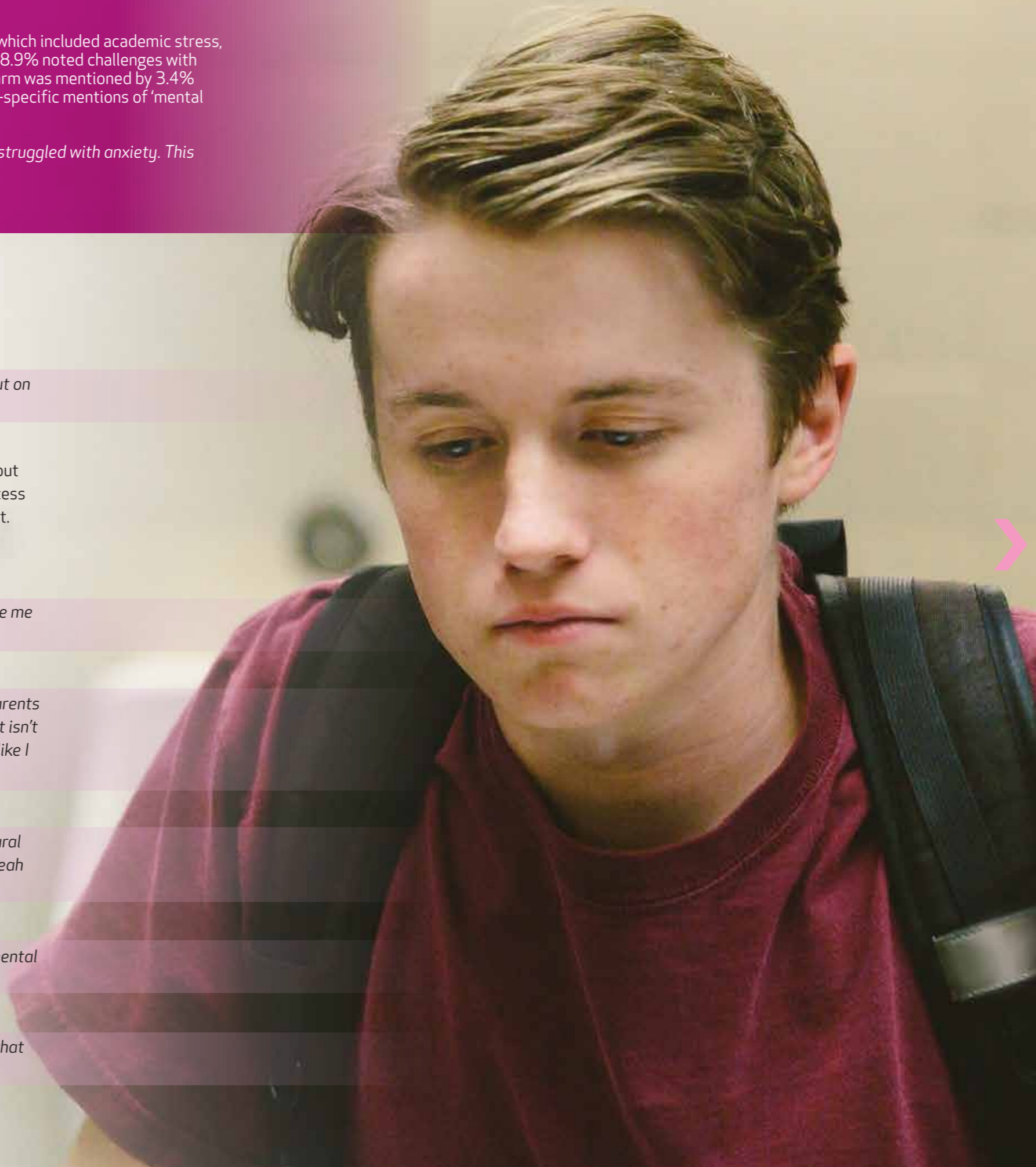
"I don't know, maybe easier access to support that is not only enticing but easy to access, especially in rural communities, as there is either no in person help nearby, only online stuff that isn't well advertised and yeah not fun." Male, 17, QLD

Talking through my concerns with family and friends

"Have more support from my family and having my family, especially my parents, be more educated in mental illness." Female, 17, VIC

Being properly diagnosed and given treatment

"A neurodivergency [sic] diagnosis would help me better understand how my brain works and then using that information to find methods to work normally in everyday life." Gender diverse, 16, NSW



My biggest challenge was related to interpersonal relationships

For those who mentioned interpersonal relationship challenges, half (52.0%) centred around family and one quarter (26.5%) were focused on forming, maintaining or ending friendships. One in ten (9.9%) relationship challenges noted very negative experiences including abuse, conflict, domestic violence, the death of a family member or parental separation. General relationship challenges (22.2%) included general mention of 'relationships', struggles with socialising/fitting in with others or issues with their social life.

"A large personal challenge that I have faced this year is my relationships with both my family and my friends which have been quite strained at times which has made it hard for me to be around certain people but has also meant at times I have had a very limited support network. Additionally the pressure of senior school has made me quite stressed and I have found my time for myself is decreasing significantly." Female, 15, NSW

How I helped myself

Young people who faced relationship challenges relied on their friends and family to help them cope or did recreational activities like listening to music.

"Music and reading as forms of escapism. Also confiding in my cousin and supporting each other." Female, 16, NSW

What more could have helped me

Young people who experienced challenges with their interpersonal relationships understood the value of proactively seeking support. However, some struggled with this aspect and acknowledged that they needed to be more open to the idea of asking for help from family, friends or a professional. Having better access to mental health services would also have helped. Some young people wished for more understanding from those closest to them when it came to their relationship challenges.

Being comfortable asking for support or advice

"Seeking help faster, being more accepting of what was happening and taking action with the problems faster instead of being too scared I would loss [sic] them too." Female, 16, VIC

Talking through my concerns with family and friends

"I think that one more thing that could have been done to address my problem is discussing my feelings more personally with the people I find close to me such as my mum." Female, 15, NSW

Asking healthcare professionals for help

"I could have spoken to someone who was a professional in order to help me understand what I was going through better." Female, 15, VIC

Better access to and availability of mental health services

"Free access to mental health services and counselling." Female, 17, QLD

More understanding from those closest to me

"Parents understanding my emotions more and for me to not feel like I can't talk to them about their separation." Female, 16, QLD

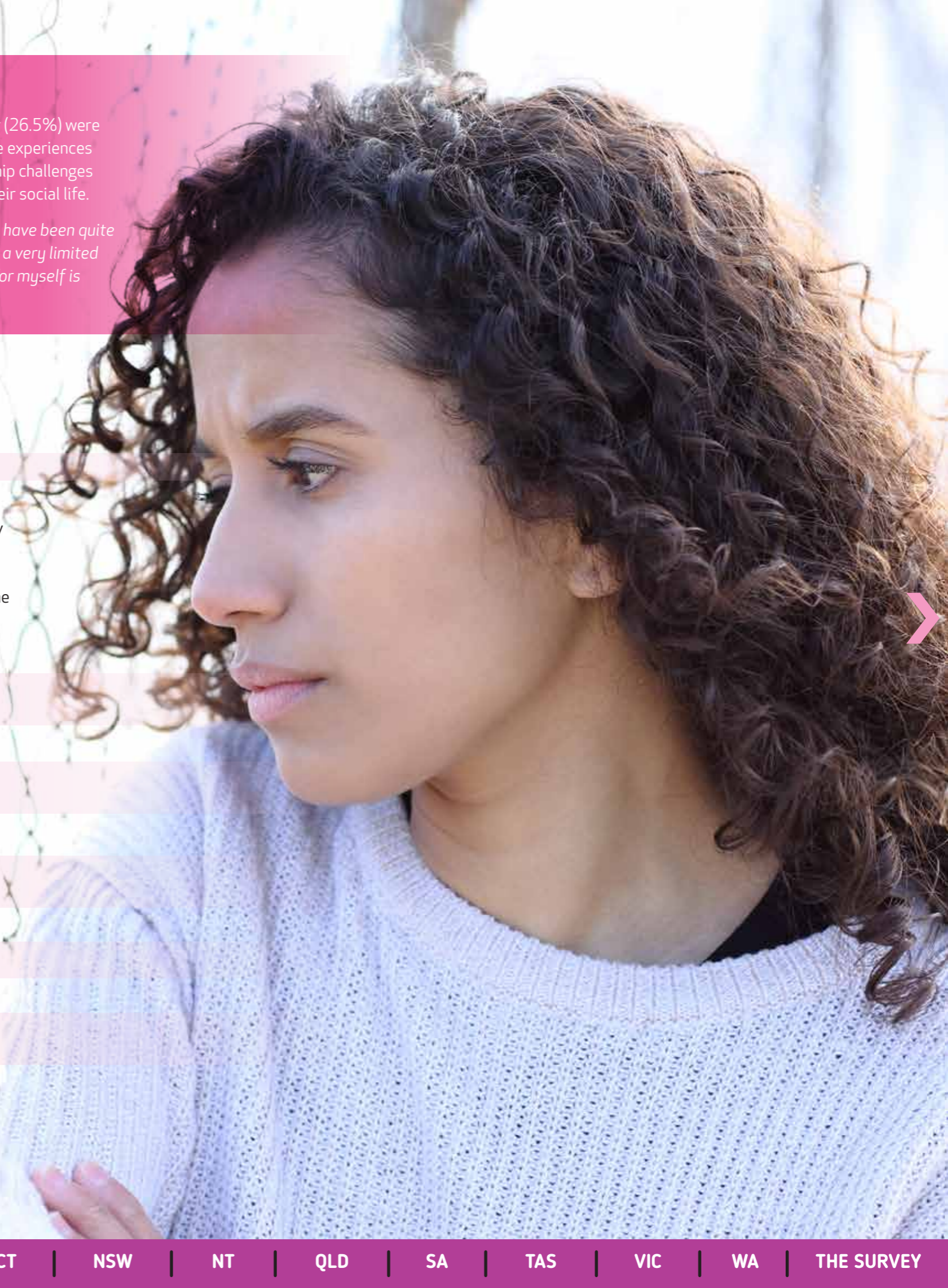


Table 2.1: Biggest personal challenge experienced by young people in the last year

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
School related challenges	49.0	54.0	44.3	35.2
Workload issues	23.5	25.0	21.3	18.1
Grades	9.5	10.2	8.3	6.7
Teachers or school staff	2.2	2.5	1.6	2.4
Learning difficulties	1.8	1.9	1.1	10.5
School (general)	85.8	86.8	84.7	85.2
Mental health challenges	24.2	31.0	13.5	38.6
Stress	26.2	27.8	25.7	14.3
Anxiety	17.2	18.6	14.4	11.7
Depression	8.9	8.0	10.8	13.0
Self-esteem	8.3	8.0	10.2	4.8
Diagnosed disorders	4.2	3.8	4.0	9.6
Eating disorder	3.9	4.5	1.7	5.2
Suicide and self-harm	3.4	3.1	2.7	9.6
Alcohol and other drugs	1.4	0.9	2.3	4.3
Addiction (not including alcohol and other drugs)	1.0	0.6	2.0	3.0
Mental health (general)	49.4	52.1	36.8	59.1
Interpersonal relationship challenges	21.3	25.9	15.0	23.8
Family	52.0	52.8	50.2	54.2
Friends	26.5	28.5	20.3	28.9
Abuse, conflict and very negative experiences	9.9	9.8	8.7	18.3
Pet	2.8	2.7	3.6	1.4
Significant other	2.2	1.6	3.4	2.8
Interpersonal relationship (general)	22.2	22.4	21.9	23.9
Financial and housing challenges	4.2	4.4	3.8	6.4
Employment	48.0	46.1	52.1	47.4
Housing	20.0	21.1	15.7	34.2
Cost of living	7.7	8.2	5.4	13.2
Finances (general)	20.5	20.5	20.7	18.4

Table 2.1: Biggest personal challenge experienced by young people in the last year (continued)

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
Other challenges	17.1	17.4	16.1	25.3
Lack of motivation	28.2	33.5	22.6	15.2
Moving to a new environment	25.6	29.5	21.3	17.2
General health	20.4	17.2	26.4	17.9
COVID-19	7.3	7.8	7.0	2.0
Self-identity	5.8	2.6	5.0	37.1
Bullying	4.9	5.6	3.2	8.6
Discrimination	1.9	1.5	1.7	6.6
Other (includes various low frequency challenges not listed above)	8.7	5.0	14.6	7.3
Not sure/no challenges identified	5.9	3.6	8.8	5.2

Note: Items based on content analysis of 84% of responses to this question. Items ranked high to low according to the national responses for top-level theme. The percentage figure for the top-level themes represents its proportion amongst the total responses for this question. Each of the top-level themes is made of the sub-themes listed below it. The percentage for the sub-themes represents its proportion amongst corresponding top-level theme. The percentages may not total 100% as responses may fall into multiple themes.

What was the biggest personal challenge you experienced in 2022-2023?

"Being homeless, loss and grief, family conflict, school problems."

How did you handle the challenge?

"Support from friends and youth workers, centreline (sic), financial support."

What more could be done to help in the future?

"More accommodation for young people."

Female, 16, WA



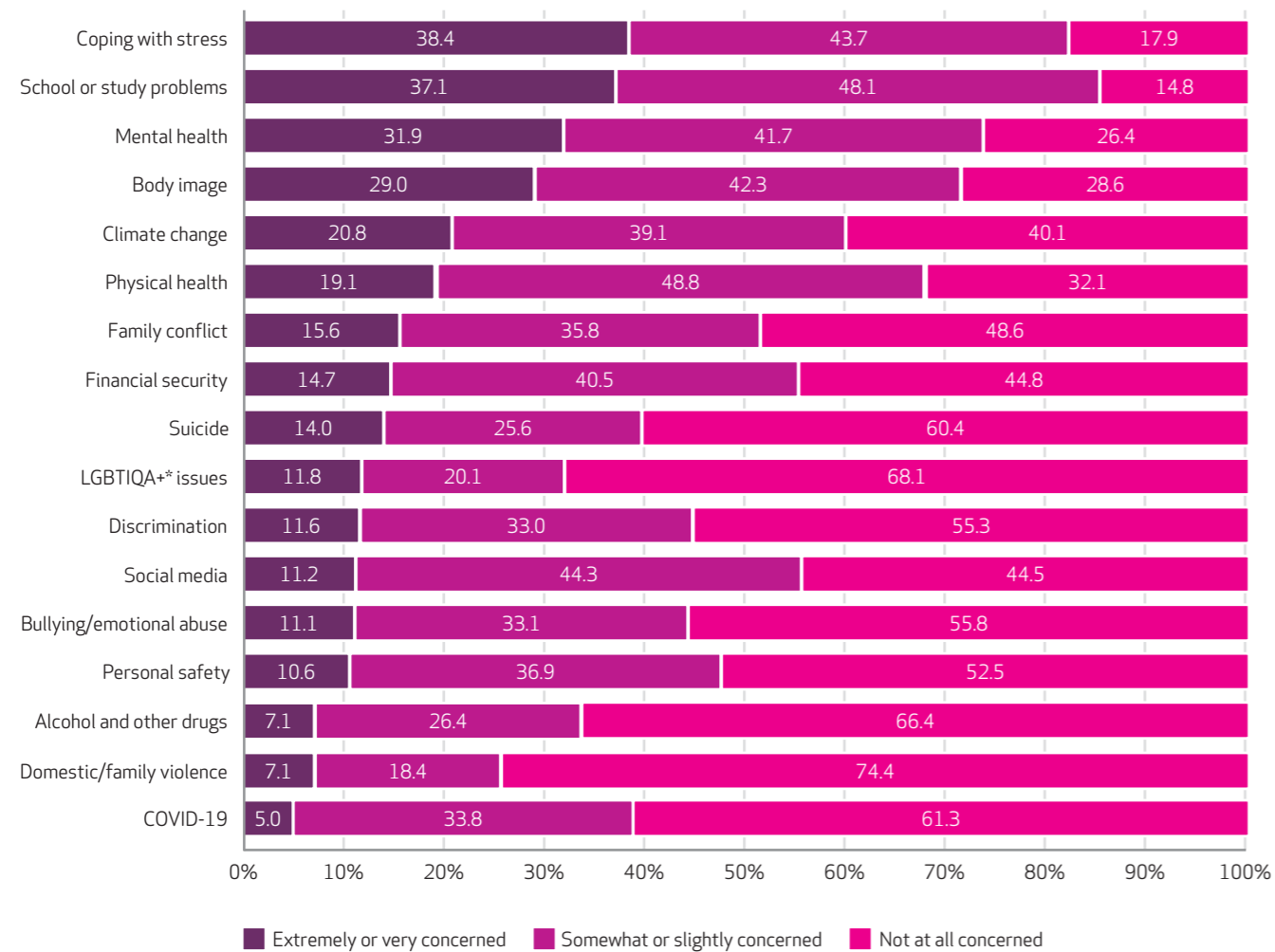
In the past year, what issues were of personal concern to young people?

The Youth Survey asks young people to rate their level of personal concern in the last year on a range of listed issues, as shown in Figure 2.1. Responses were rated on a 5-point scale that spanned from *extremely concerned* to *not at all concerned*.

Consistent with the 2022 Youth Survey (Leung et al., 2022), the top four issues of personal concern for young people this year were *coping with stress*, *school or study problems*, *mental health* and *body image*.

- Close to two in five (38.4%) respondents said they were *extremely or very concerned* about *coping with stress*, closely followed by *school or study problems* at 37.1%.
- Around three in ten respondents were *extremely or very concerned* about *mental health* (31.9%) or *body image* (29.0%)
- COVID-19 has shifted from being the fifth ranked personal concern in 2021 (Tiller et al., 2021), with 28.6% *extremely or very concerned* about it, to the seventh top personal concern in 2022 (Leung et al., 2022), to being the last ranked issue this year, with only 5.0% of young people indicating high levels of concern.

Figure 2.1: Issues of personal concern to young people



Base: All respondents. Sample sizes vary per row.

Note: Items ranked high to low according to the responses for *extremely or very concerned* for each item. * Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual issues.

Gender differences

Males and females share the same top three personal concerns (*coping with stress*, *school or study problems* and *mental health*) in a slightly different order, as shown in Tables 2.2a and Table 2.2b. These were the same top issues identified in 2022 (Leung et al., 2022). A higher proportion of females were concerned about these and other issues compared with males.

- Half (50.6%) of females were *extremely or very concerned* about *coping with stress* compared with two in five males (19.9%).
- Following *coping with stress*, the issues with the greatest differences of concern levels between females and males were *body image* (39.4% compared with 13.4%), *school or study problems* (47.1% compared with 22.3%) and *mental health* (40.4% compared with 17.1%).

As shown in Table 2.2c, gender diverse young people had the highest levels of concern about *mental health* and *LGBTIQA+ issues*, with six in ten (62.1%) *extremely or very concerned* about each. The third and fourth issues of concern for gender diverse young people were *coping with stress* (56.8%) and *school or study problems* (48.8%).

- The proportion of gender diverse young people who were *extremely or very concerned* about each issue was greater than females or males.
- Concerningly, almost two in five (38.7%) gender diverse young people had high levels of personal concern about *suicide*, compared with 16.0% of females and 8.6% of males.

Table 2.2a: Issues of personal concern to females

Females	Extremely or very concerned %	Somewhat or slightly concerned %	Not at all concerned %
Coping with stress	50.6	41.6	7.8
School or study problems	47.1	44.6	8.2
Mental health	40.4	43.8	15.9
Body image	39.4	44.4	16.3
Climate change	24.9	44.1	31.0
Physical health	21.2	53.3	25.5
Family conflict	19.8	40.1	40.1
Financial security	16.3	42.8	40.9
Suicide	16.0	28.4	55.5
Social media	13.8	51.0	35.2
Bullying/emotional abuse	13.3	37.1	49.5
Discrimination	12.9	37.6	49.6
Personal safety	12.2	40.8	47.0
LGBTIQA+ issues	10.2	25.5	64.3
Domestic/family violence	8.1	20.5	71.4
Alcohol and other drugs	7.8	29.5	62.7
COVID-19	5.7	40.5	53.8

Note: Items ranked high to low according to the female responses for *extremely or very concerned* for each item. * Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual issues.

Table 2.2b: Issues of personal concern to males

Males	Extremely or very concerned %	Somewhat or slightly concerned %	Not at all concerned %
School or study problems	22.3	54.5	23.2
Coping with stress	19.9	48.4	31.6
Mental health	17.1	41.2	41.6
Physical health	15.4	42.5	42.0
Body image	13.4	40.8	45.8
Climate change	13.0	33.3	53.7
Financial security	11.2	37.3	51.5
Suicide	8.6	20.5	70.9
LGBTIQA+* issues	8.4	12.9	78.7
Family conflict	8.1	30.0	61.9
Discrimination	7.4	26.2	66.4
Personal safety	7.0	30.9	62.1
Social media	6.8	35.2	58.0
Bullying/emotional abuse	6.3	27.2	66.5
Alcohol and other drugs	5.2	21.5	73.4
Domestic/family violence	4.7	14.4	80.9
COVID-19	3.2	23.9	72.9

Note: Items ranked high to low according to the male responses for extremely or very concerned for each item. * Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual issues.

Table 2.2c: Issues of personal concern to gender diverse people

Gender diverse	Extremely or very concerned %	Somewhat or slightly concerned %	Not at all concerned %
LGBTIQA+* issues	62.1	15.8	22.1
Mental health	62.1	20.4	17.5
Coping with stress	56.8	27.0	16.2
School or study problems	48.8	34.7	16.5
Body image	46.2	30.7	23.0
Climate change	42.2	31.8	26.0
Suicide	38.7	32.3	29.0
Discrimination	37.5	36.6	25.8
Family conflict	31.4	35.4	33.3
Financial security	29.2	38.0	32.8
Bullying/emotional abuse	28.2	34.9	36.9
Physical health	28.0	48.1	23.9
Personal safety	24.0	42.2	33.7
Social media	18.4	42.5	39.1
Domestic/family violence	18.2	27.0	54.7
Alcohol and other drugs	16.9	33.7	49.3
COVID-19	12.1	39.3	48.5

Note: Items ranked high to low according to the gender diverse responses for extremely or very concerned for each item. * Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual issues.

"The biggest personal challenge that I have faced in the past year would most certainly be the sudden and unexpected closure of my school and the overall impacts that that has had on me, my family and the entire school's lives."

Male, 15, VIC



"Getting comfortable and figuring out my own LGBTQ identity and how to progree (sic) my own understanding while still having to stay in the closet."

Gender diverse, 16, SA



NATIONAL CONCERNS

What do young people think are the most important issues in Australia today?

Young people were asked to list the three most important issues in Australia today. The open-ended responses were thematically analysed and listed in order of frequency in Table 3.1.

The top issues identified by young people in 2023 were *the environment* (44.0%), *equity and discrimination* (31.4%), *the economy and financial matters* (31.2%) and *mental health* (30.3%).

We have seen increased awareness among young people this year about contemporary issues relating to *the economy and financial matters, housing and homelessness* and *crime, safety and violence*.

Gender differences

Although the overall national results are well-defined, there are clear differences in the thinking of young people based on their gender.

- A higher proportion of females than males identified *the environment* (50.0% compared with 36.4%), *mental health* (37.3% compared with 21.4%) and *equity and discrimination* (35.3% compared with 25.5%) as important issues facing Australia today.
- Conversely, higher proportions of males than females regarded *the economy and financial matters* (33.6% compared with 29.7%), *alcohol and drugs* (13.8% compared to 11.2%) and *politics* (9.3% compared with 5.5%) as key issues in Australia.
- The cohort that reported the highest proportion for *equity and discrimination* and *politics* as important issues facing Australia today were gender diverse young people (37.9% compared to 35.3% of females and 25.5% of males and 9.5% compared to 5.5% of females and 9.3% of males respectively).

Table 3.1: Most important issues in Australia today

	National 2023 %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %	National 2022 %*	National 2021 %**
The environment	44.0	50.0	36.4	36.8	51.0	38.0
Equity and discrimination	31.4	35.3	25.5	37.9	35.9	35.4
The economy and financial matters	31.2	29.7	33.6	31.8	22.0	10.9
Mental health	30.3	37.3	21.4	24.4	33.9	34.6
Homelessness / housing	18.5	19.0	17.6	18.8	12.4	7.0
Crime, safety and violence	17.7	19.1	16.5	11.8	10.4	10.9
Alcohol and drugs	12.1	11.2	13.8	9.3	7.4	10.6
Education	7.4	8.3	6.2	6.5	7.9	6.7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues	7.3	8.5	5.6	8.4	4.4	4.0
Politics	7.2	5.5	9.3	9.5	9.9	6.5

Base: All respondents. National n=15,556; Females n=8,322; Males n=5,961; Gender diverse n=570

Note: Items are listed in order of national frequency for 2023. Analysis of this question was conducted using a different methodology in 2023 and 2022 compared to 2021 Youth Survey reports which may impact comparisons with the prior years.

* Leung et al., 2022.

** Tiller et al., 2021.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Are young people studying?

As shown in Table 4.1, 86.2% of respondents were studying full-time and another 7.4% were studying part-time.

- A higher proportion of females reported studying full-time (90.2% compared with 81.7% of males and 80.5% of gender diverse young people).
- Whereas a higher proportion of males and gender diverse young people reported studying part-time (10.2% males and 9.5% of gender diverse young people compared with 5.1% of females) or not studying (10.0% of gender diverse young people and 8.0% of males compared with 4.7% of females).

Table 4.1: Participation in education

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
Studying full-time	86.2	90.2	81.7	80.5
Studying part-time	7.4	5.1	10.2	9.5
Not studying	6.4	4.7	8.0	10.0

Base: All respondents. National n=19,414; Females n=10,293; Males n=7,516; Gender diverse n=682

How satisfied are young people with their studies?

Of those currently studying, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their studies. Responses to this question were rated on a 5-point scale that ranged from *very satisfied* to *very dissatisfied*. As in previous years, more than half of all respondents reported they were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied* (62.9%) with their studies (see Table 4.2). Close to one in 10 (9.0%) indicated they were *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied*.

A higher proportion of females reported feeling *very satisfied* or *satisfied* (65.3% compared with 61.6% of males and 48.3% of gender diverse young people). Conversely, a higher proportion of gender diverse respondents indicated they felt *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* (21.5% compared with 8.9% of males and 8.1% of females).

Table 4.2: Satisfaction with studies

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
Very satisfied or satisfied	62.9	65.3	61.6	48.3
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	28.1	26.6	29.5	30.1
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	9.0	8.1	8.9	21.5

Base: Respondents currently studying. National n=17,766; Females n=9,592; Males n=6,748; Gender diverse n=604

Do young people plan on finishing school?

Of the respondents still at school, the majority (97.2%) stated they intended to complete Year 12. A higher proportion of gender diverse young people and males reported that they did not plan to complete Year 12 (5.2% of gender diverse young people and 4.1% of males compared with 1.6% of females).

What are the plans of young people after school?

As indicated in Figure 4.1, seven in 10 (70.0%) respondents plan to *go to university* after school. Close to half (46.2%) of respondents reported plans to *get a job* and almost a third (32.5%) indicating *travel/gap year* plans.

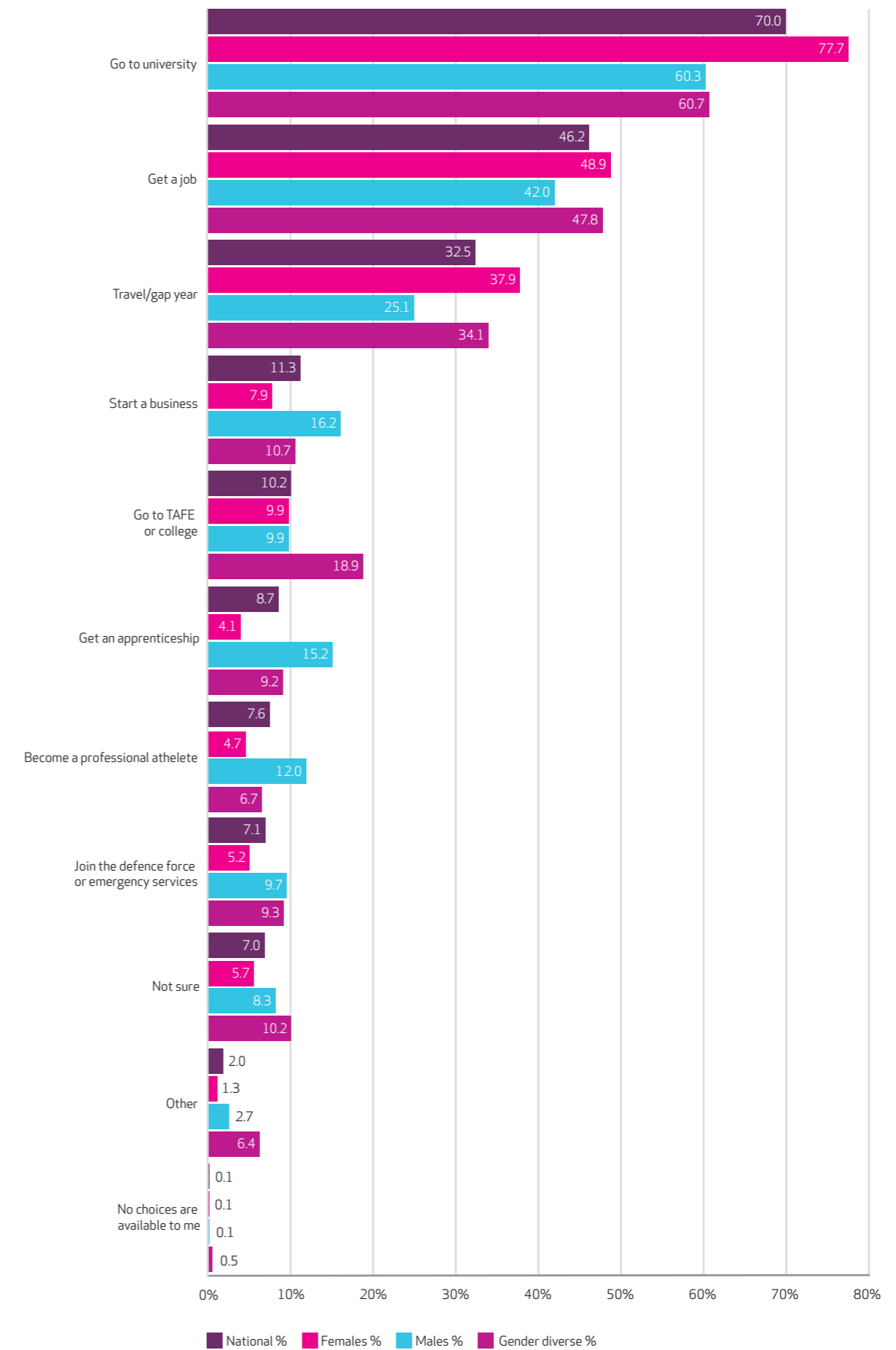
Gender differences

The top three plans after leaving school were the same for females, males and gender diverse people.

- While the most frequently reported plan among all respondents was to *go to university*, a higher proportion of females indicated they planned to do so (77.7% compared with 60.7% of gender diverse young people and 60.3% of males).
- A higher proportion of female and gender diverse respondents reported they intend to *get a job* (48.9% of females and 47.8% of gender diverse young people compared with 42.0% of males) or have *travel/gap year* plans after leaving school (37.9% of females and 34.1% of gender diverse young people compared with 25.1% of males).
- Close to double the proportion of males than females reported they were planning to *start a business* after school (16.2% compared with 7.9% of females). A higher proportion of males also indicated they were planning to *get an apprenticeship* (15.2% of males compared with 9.2% of gender diverse young people and 4.1% of females).



Figure 4.1: Plans after leaving school



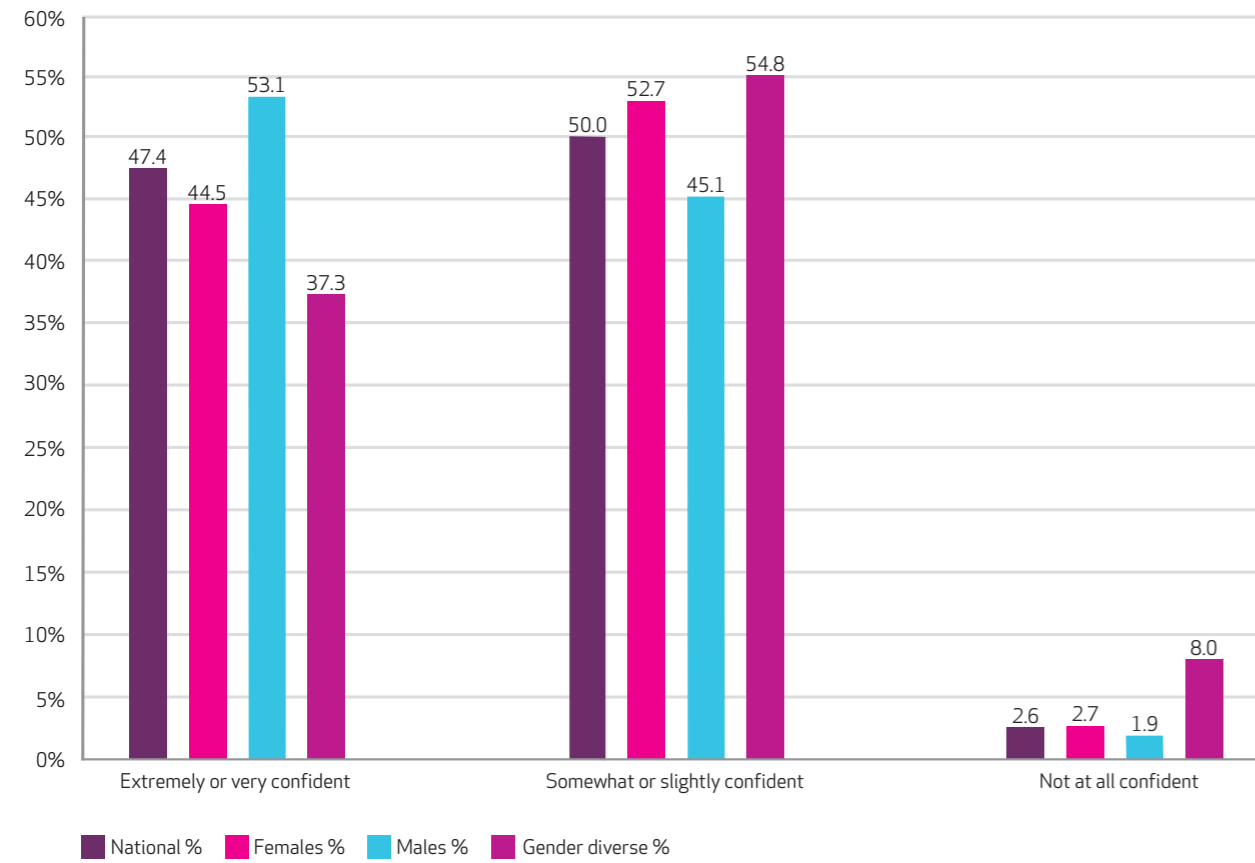
Base: Respondents studying at school or equivalent. National n=17,492; Females n=9,527; Males n=6,585; Gender diverse n=578
 Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of national frequency. Examples included for *other* are based on responses to the free text box to specify *other*.

How confident are young people in achieving their study/work goals?

Respondents were asked how confident they were in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after finishing school. Responses to this question were rated on a 5-point scale that ranged from *extremely confident* to *not at all confident*.

- Figure 4.2 shows that close to half (47.4%) of respondents indicated they were *extremely or very confident* in their ability to achieve their study/work goals.
- A higher proportion of male respondents reported they were *extremely or very confident* in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school (53.1% compared with 44.5% of females and 37.3% of gender diverse young people). Conversely, a higher proportion of gender diverse young people reported they were *not at all confident* in their ability to achieve their study/work goals (8.0% compared with 2.7% of females and 1.9% of males).

Figure 4.2: Confidence in achieving study/work goals



Base: Respondents studying at school or equivalent. National n=17,052; Females n=9,310; Males n=6,420; Gender diverse n=553

What are the barriers to achieving study/work goals?

Respondents were asked if they felt there were any barriers that impact on the achievement of their study/work goals after school. Close to two in five (37.0%) young people felt there were barriers that would impact on the achievement of their study/work goals as shown in Table 4.3.

Of the respondents that felt that there were barriers, over two in five (42.4%) reported *mental health* was a barrier impacting their achievement of study/work goals (see Table 4.4). The second and third highest barriers reported were *academic ability* (36.5%) and *financial difficulty* (28.9%).

Gender differences

- Higher proportion of females (40.3%) and gender diverse young people (64.3%) reported there were barriers compared with males (29.1%).
- While the most frequently reported barrier among all respondents was *mental health*, a higher proportion of females (45.7%) and gender diverse young people (69.0%) reported this barrier compared with males (30.5%).
- A higher proportion of females reported *academic ability* as a barrier (40.0% compared with 30.8% of males and 30.7% of gender diverse young people), while a higher proportion of gender diverse young people and females reported *financial difficulty* as a barrier (34.0% of gender diverse young people and 30.3% of females compared with 24.7% of males).

Table 4.3: Are there any barriers to young people achieving their study/work goals

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
Yes	37.0	40.3	29.1	64.3
No	63.0	59.7	70.9	36.6

Base: Respondents studying at school or equivalent. National n=16,215; Females n=8,950; Males n=6,027; Gender diverse n=513



Table 4.4: Barriers to achieving study/work goals

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
Mental health	42.4	45.7	30.5	69.0
Academic ability	36.5	40.0	30.8	30.7
Financial difficulty	28.9	30.3	24.7	34.0
Admission / job requirements	16.9	17.9	14.5	19.6
Where you live	16.2	15.9	16.9	18.4
Lack of information	15.6	15.6	15.5	17.5
Family responsibilities	13.0	13.3	12.0	15.0
Lack of jobs	12.6	12.3	12.1	16.6
Transport	11.5	10.8	11.7	16.3
Lack of school support	9.8	10.0	8.1	14.1
Physical health	9.5	7.8	10.5	19.0
Lack of family support	9.1	9.4	7.0	14.4
Discrimination	7.0	5.4	6.2	27.9
Caring responsibilities	5.1	4.8	5.4	6.7
COVID-19	3.2	2.9	3.4	4.6
Cultural responsibilities	2.6	2.1	3.0	4.9
Other	7.7	5.6	11.9	9.2

Base: Respondents who said there were barriers to achieving study/work goals. National n=5,994; Females n=3,606; Males n=1,755; Gender diverse n=326
 Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of national frequency.
 Examples included for other are based on responses to the free text box to specify other.

Are young people working?

Respondents were asked whether they currently have paid work and if so, how many hours they work in an average week. Table 4.5 shows over half (52.8%) of respondents reported they were in paid employment. Close to half (48.2%) reported they were a casual employee and 4.6% reported they were a permanent employee.

- Close to half (47.2%) of respondents indicated they were not in paid employment. Just over one quarter of respondents (26.6%) stated they were looking for work while 20.6% were not looking for work.
- Of the respondents in paid work (see Table 4.6), a small proportion of young people were working full-time (1.4%). A notably higher proportion of gender diverse young people reported they were working full-time (9.5% compared with 1.8% of males and 0.6% of females).

Table 4.5: Participation in paid employment

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
Permanent employee	4.6	4.5	4.6	5.1
Casual employee	48.2	50.7	46.1	40.1
Not in paid employment, looking for work	26.6	24.5	28.9	30.3
Not in paid employment, NOT looking for work	20.6	20.3	20.4	24.5

Base: All respondents in paid employment. National n=19,390; Females n=10,279; Males n=7,506; Gender diverse n=683

Table 4.6: Employment type

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
Working full-time	1.4	0.6	1.8	9.5
Working part-time	98.6	99.4	98.2	90.5

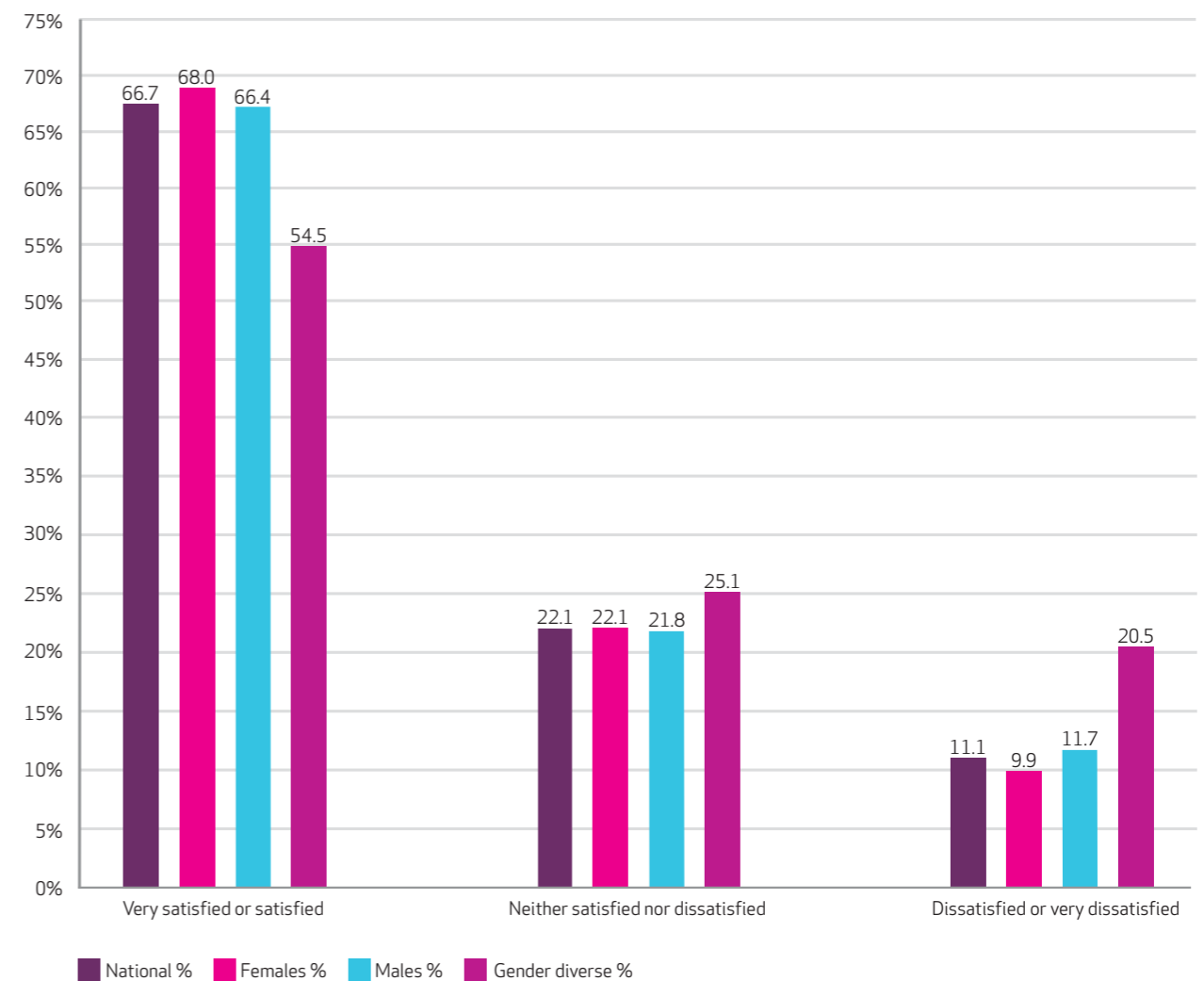
Base: Respondents in paid employment. National n=10,031; Females n=5,560; Males n=3,727; Gender diverse n=304
 Note: Part-time employment is considered to be less than 35 hours per week, while full-time employment is considered to be 35 hours or more.

How satisfied are young people with their job?

Of those currently in paid work, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their jobs. Figure 4.3 shows that more than 65% of respondents reported they were either very satisfied or satisfied (66.7%) with their job. One in 10 (11.1%) indicated they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

- A higher proportion of females reported feeling very satisfied or satisfied with their jobs (68.0% compared with 66.4% of males and 54.5% of gender diverse young people). Conversely, a higher proportion of gender diverse respondents indicated they felt dissatisfied or very dissatisfied (20.5% compared with 11.7% of males and 9.9% of females).

Figure 4.3: Satisfaction with job



Base: Respondents in paid employment. National n=10,024; Females n=5,552; Males n=3,729; Gender diverse n=303

"...applying for my job was a huge challenge. I had to build my confidence in talking to people I did not know."

Male, 16, VIC

WELLBEING

How do young people rate their overall mental health and wellbeing?

Young people were asked to rate their general mental health and wellbeing on a 5-point scale ranging from *excellent* to *poor* as shown in Figure 5.1. One in three (32.4%) respondents rated their mental health and wellbeing as *excellent* (10.4%) or *very good* (22.0%), with close to two in five (37.7%) selecting either *fair* (25.4%) or *poor* (12.3%).

Males were more likely to rate their mental health and wellbeing as *excellent* (17.8% compared with 5.4% of females and 7.0% of gender diverse young people). Close to two in five (38.6%) gender diverse respondents rated their mental health and wellbeing as *poor*, over double that of females (14.1%) and five times higher than males (7.0%).

Figure 5.1: Young people's overall mental health and wellbeing



Base: All respondents. National n=19,110; Females n=10,146; Males n=7,384; Gender diverse n=668

How do young people rate their subjective wellbeing?

The *Youth Survey* uses the Personal Wellbeing Index – School Children (PWI-SC) (Cummins & Lau, 2005), which is a validated measure of a young person's subjective wellbeing (Tomy & Cummins, 2011). It involves respondents rating their happiness with life as a whole and across the seven life domains on a scale of zero to 10. The Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) is calculated by converting the combined mean scores for the life domains into a score out of 100 to represent a person's overall subjective wellbeing.

The PWI score has been interpreted using the following guidelines as suggested by Weinburg & Tomy (2015):

- 70 or above points = person is likely to be experiencing a normal level of wellbeing
- 51 to 69 points = personal wellbeing is likely to be challenged/compromised
- 50 or below points = very low personal wellbeing/strong likelihood of depression.

Table 5.1 includes the mean PWI scores of 2023 *Youth Survey* respondents. The national mean scores for Australian adults have been included for reference.

- The mean rating for *how happy are you with your life as a whole?* was 65.7, notably lower than the Australian adult normative range of 75.5 - 79.3.
- The mean PWI score for respondents was 68.2, also below the Australian adult normative range of 74.2 - 76.8.
- Life domains with the highest scores were happiness with *how safe you feel* (77.4), happiness with *the things you have* (73.1) and happiness with *doing things away from home* (73.0). These are consistent with the top domains in the 2022 *Youth Survey* (Leung et al., 2022).
- The life domain that had the lowest mean was happiness with *what may happen to you later in life* (59.7).

Gender differences

- The average PWI score was higher for males (71.7 compared with 66.8 for females and 55.7 for gender diverse young people).
- Gender diverse young people rated their happiness lower than males and females across all life domains.

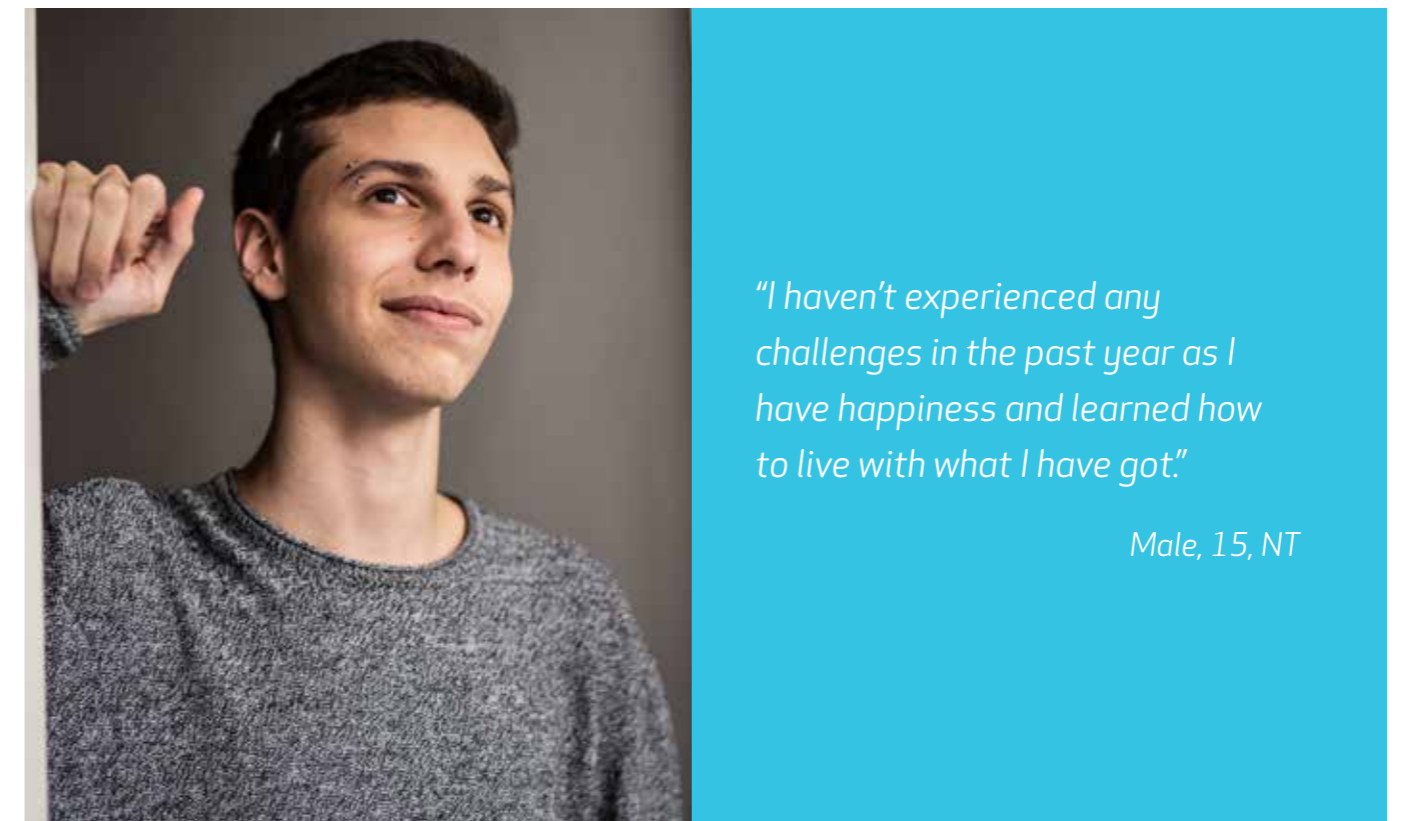
Table 5.1: Mean Personal Wellbeing Index scores of respondents compared with Australian adults

	National	Females	Males	Gender diverse	Australian adults*	Normative range for Australian adults (±2SD)*
How happy are you with your life as a whole	65.7	63.8	70.0	50.3	77.4	75.5 - 79.3
Personal Wellbeing Index	68.2	66.8	71.7	55.7	75.5	74.2 - 76.8
How happy are you...						
about the things you have e.g. money	73.1	72.9	74.5	62.8	78.2	75.8 - 80.6
with your health	65.9	63.3	71.1	51.7	74.2	72.5 - 76.0
with things you want to be good at	62.4	59.6	67.4	52.6	72.1	69.9 - 74.5
with getting on with the people you know	70.4	69.0	73.7	58.7	78.2	75.7 - 80.9
about how safe you feel	77.4	76.7	80.5	58.5	79.2	75.4 - 83.1
doing things away from home	73.0	71.3	76.5	63.9	70.1	68.2 - 72.1
about what may happen to you later in your life	59.7	56.8	65.4	45.0	68.7	65.5 - 72.0
with your connection to culture**	68.1	68.2	68.9	60.5	NA	NA

Base: All respondents. Sample sizes vary per row.

*National average index is based on aggregated survey mean scores from 2002 to 2021 of adults 18 years and over where mean age = 50.55 and SD = 17.47 (Khor et al., 2021).

**This question is not officially part of the PWI but a supplementary question to spiritual and/or cultural beliefs. Respondents who answered yes to having spiritual and/or cultural beliefs were able to respond to this question.



How much control do young people feel they have over their life?

As shown in Table 5.2, respondents were asked to rate how much control they felt they have over their life on 5-point scale ranging from *no control* to *complete control*. One in 10 (9.6%) respondents said that they had *complete control* over their life, with 46.3% selecting they were *mostly in control*. One in 10 (10.0%) reported that they had *almost no control* (7.7%) or *no control* (2.3%) over their life.

A higher proportion of males said they had *complete control* over their lives (15.3% compared with 8.0% of gender diverse young people and 5.5% of females), while more gender diverse young people said they had *no control* (8.9% compared with 2.1% of females and 1.7% of males).

Table 5.2: Young people's level of control over their life

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
Complete control	9.6	5.5	15.3	8.0
Mostly in control	46.3	45.4	50.4	24.5
Some control	34.1	38.3	27.9	38.6
Almost no control	7.7	8.7	4.8	20.0
No control	2.3	2.1	1.7	8.9

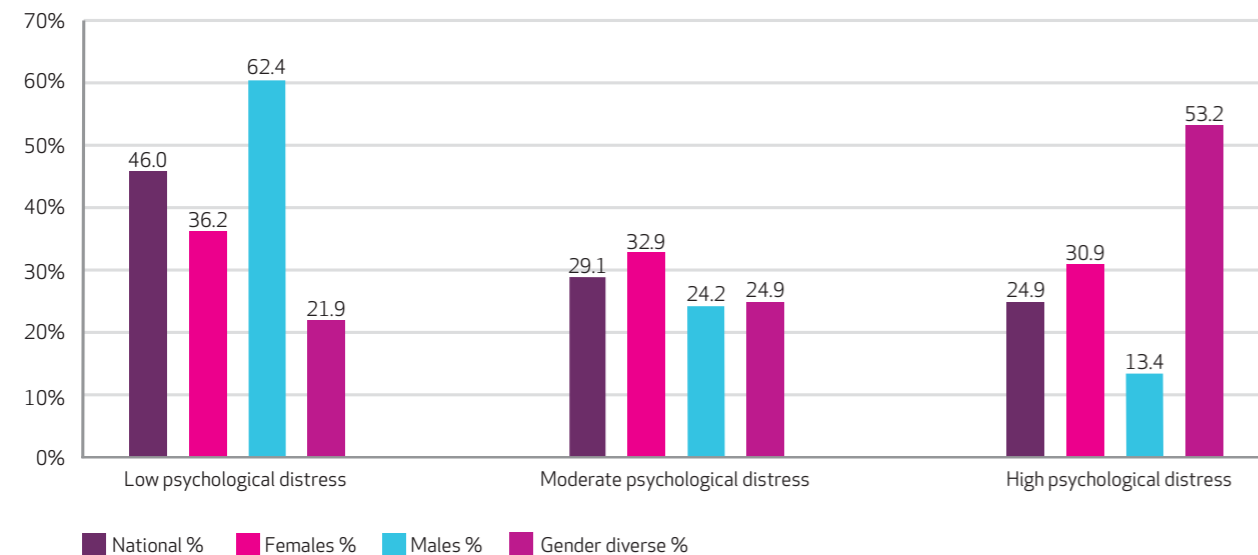
Base: All respondents. National n=18,982; Females n=10,085; Males n=7,336; Gender diverse n=664

What is the level of psychological distress in young people?

The Kessler 6 (K6) is a measure of non-specific psychological distress (Kessler et al., 2002). It includes a six-item scale that asks respondents how frequently in the past four weeks they have felt: 1) *nervous*; 2) *hopeless*; 3) *restless or fidgety*; 4) *so sad that nothing could cheer them up*; 5) *that everything was an effort*; and 6) *worthless*. Based on scoring criteria used by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (Rioseco, Warren & Daraganova, 2020), the K6 has been used to classify respondents into the following three groups: low psychological distress (mental disorder unlikely), medium psychological distress (mental disorder possible) and high psychological distress (mental disorder very likely).

- As shown in Figure 5.2, almost half (46.0%) of the *Youth Survey* respondents were classified as having low psychological distress based on their K6 responses. K6 scores for three in 10 (29.1%) pointed to moderate psychological distress. One quarter (24.9%) of respondents had K6 scores that indicated high psychological distress.
- K6 scores for over three in five (62.4%) males indicated low psychological distress (compared with 36.2% of females and 21.9% of gender diverse young people).
- Over half (53.2%) of gender diverse young people had high psychological distress, as did three in 10 (30.9%) females.

Figure 5.2: Level of psychological distress in young people



Base: All respondents. National n=18,554; Females n=9,885; Males n=7,149; Gender diverse n=643

Note: Cut-off scores for categories of psychological distress are as follows: low = 0 to 7, moderate = 8 to 12 and high = 13 to 24 (Hilton et al., 2008). These cut-off scores are used by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (Rioseco, Warren & Daraganova, 2020).

How lonely are young people?

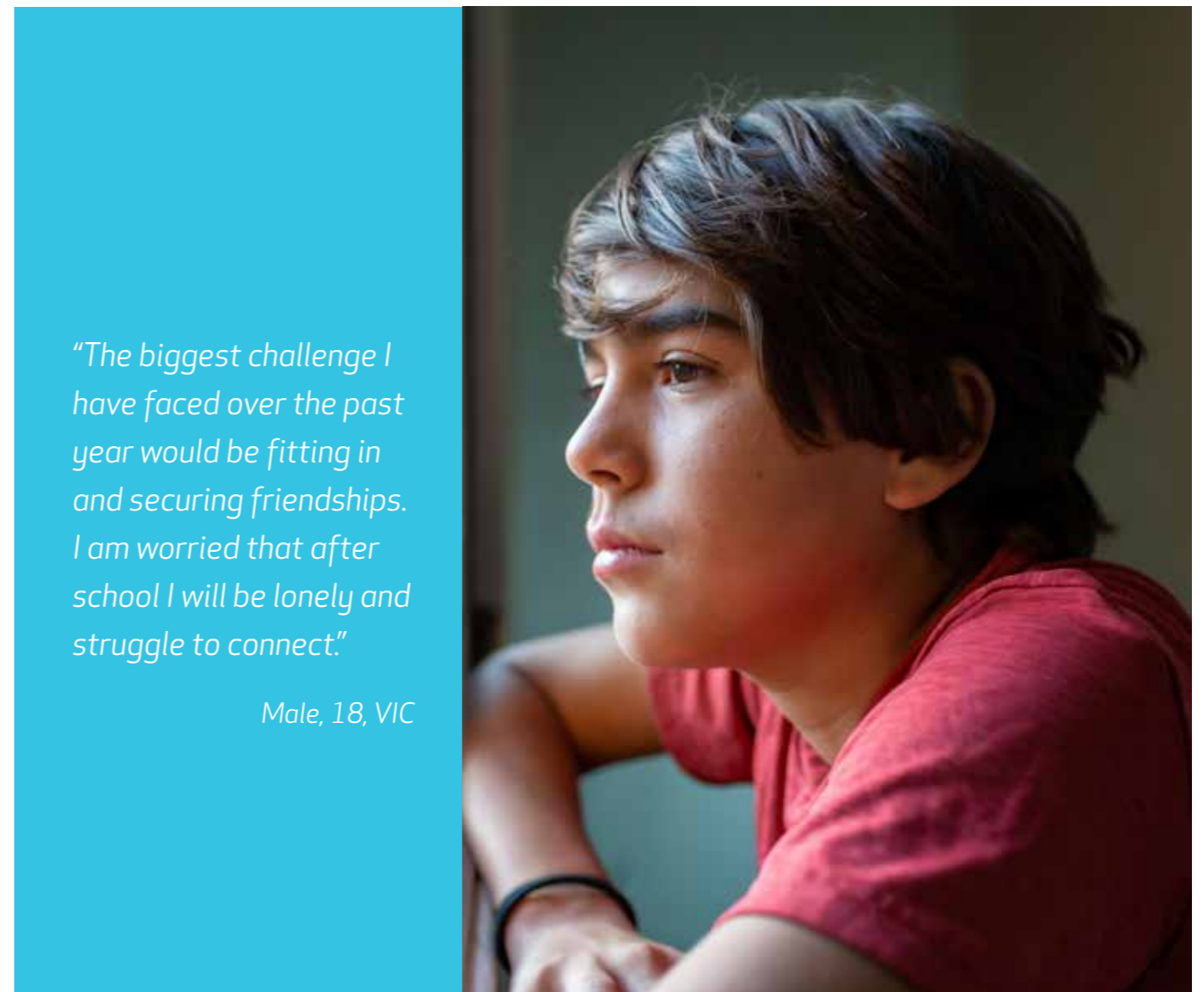
Young people were asked to select how much of the time in the past four weeks they have felt lonely. They were provided with a 5-point scale ranging from *all of the time* to *none of the time* as shown in Table 5.3.

- One in five (20.8%) respondents said they felt lonely *most of the time* (16.6%) or *all of the time* (4.2%).
- Over two in five (44.9%) gender diverse young people said they felt lonely *most of the time* or *all of the time*, almost double that of females (22.9%) and nearly three times higher than males (15.3%).

Table 5.3: Young people's level of loneliness

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
None of the time	17.2	12.2	24.9	11.0
A little of the time	31.1	30.9	32.9	17.0
Some of the time	30.8	34.1	26.9	27.1
Most of the time	16.6	18.8	12.1	31.2
All of the time	4.2	4.1	3.2	13.7

Base: All respondents. National n=18,991; Females n=10,091; Males n=7,337; Gender diverse n=664

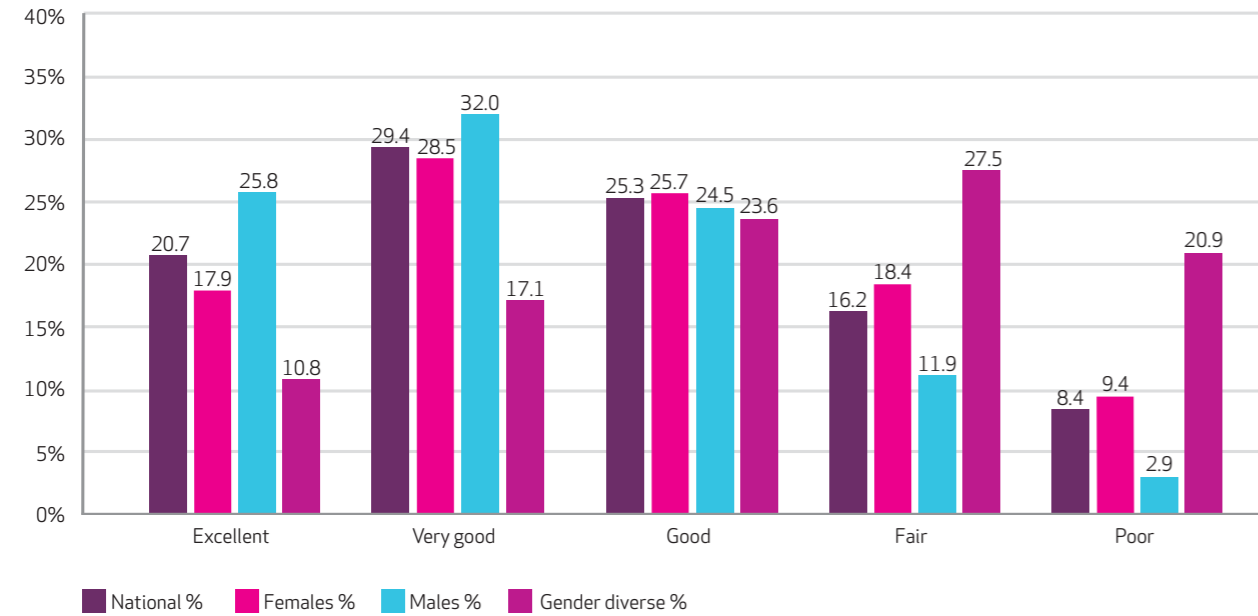


How do young people rate their family's ability to get along?

As shown in Figure 5.3, young people were asked to rate their family's ability to get along with one another on a 5-point scale that ranged from excellent to poor.

- Half (50.1%) of the respondents rated their family's ability to get along as excellent (20.7%) or very good (29.4%).
- One quarter (24.6%) of young people said their family's ability to get along was either fair (16.2%) or poor (8.4%).
- Males gave the most positive ratings of their family's ability to get along, with 57.8% rating excellent or good (compared with 46.4% of females and 27.9% of gender diverse young people).

Figure 5.3: Family's ability to get along with one another



Base: All respondents. National n=18,926; Females n=10,059; Males n=7,309; Gender diverse n=665

How do young people feel about the future?

Young people were asked to select how they feel about the future on a 5-point scale that ranged from very positive to very negative.

- Table 5.4 shows that half (50.0%) of young people felt either very positive or positive about the future.
- One third (33.5%) of respondents were neutral in their feelings about the future and the remaining 16.5% felt negative or very negative about the future.
- A higher proportion of males reported feeling very positive or positive about the future (56.3% compared with 47.2% of females and 30.5% of gender diverse young people).

Positivity about the future is in line with 2022 results (Leung et al., 2022). This stabilises declines from 2021 (Tiller et al., 2021) and 2020 (Tiller et al., 2020) when 51.6% and 55.5% of respondents felt very positive or positive about the future.

Table 5.4: Feelings about the future

	National 2023 %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %	National 2022 %	National 2021 %	National 2020 %
Very positive or positive	50.0	47.2	56.3	30.5	49.9	51.6	55.5
Neither positive nor negative	33.5	35.7	30.5	33.0	32.8	32.5	30.5
Negative or very negative	16.5	17.1	13.2	36.5	17.3	16.0	13.9

Base: All respondents. National n=18,953; Females n=10,065; Males n=7,323; Gender diverse n=666

"...My parents were divorced four years ago and the living situation between houses has been very difficult to manage. My parents cannot communicate in any manner without arguing. This is particularly a problem when I need both of their permission to do something, and due to the financial problems it causes."

Female, 17, TAS



"Coping with many problems and personal struggles without much support or not a lot of resources. Specifically, the pressure of knowing right now what I want to do in the future. I really don't know what I'm good at and don't have the resources to actually apply my skills in a practical sense without searching for a job."

Gender diverse, 15, VIC



SUPPORT AND CONNECTEDNESS

Where do young people go for help with important issues?

Respondents were asked to indicate from a number of sources where they would go for help with important issues in their lives. Figure 6.1 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated they would go to each particular source for support.

- *Friend(s)* (72.8%) and *parent(s) or guardians(s)* (66.3%) were the most frequently cited sources of help for young people, consistent with 2022 (Leung et al, 2022).
- Around two in five young people said they would go to a *relative/family friend* (41.9%) with a similar result for *brother/sister* (39.4%).
- Following the top four sources of support, all of which related to personal relationships, one quarter (24.6%) of young people said they would turn to the *Internet* for help with important issues in their life.

Gender differences

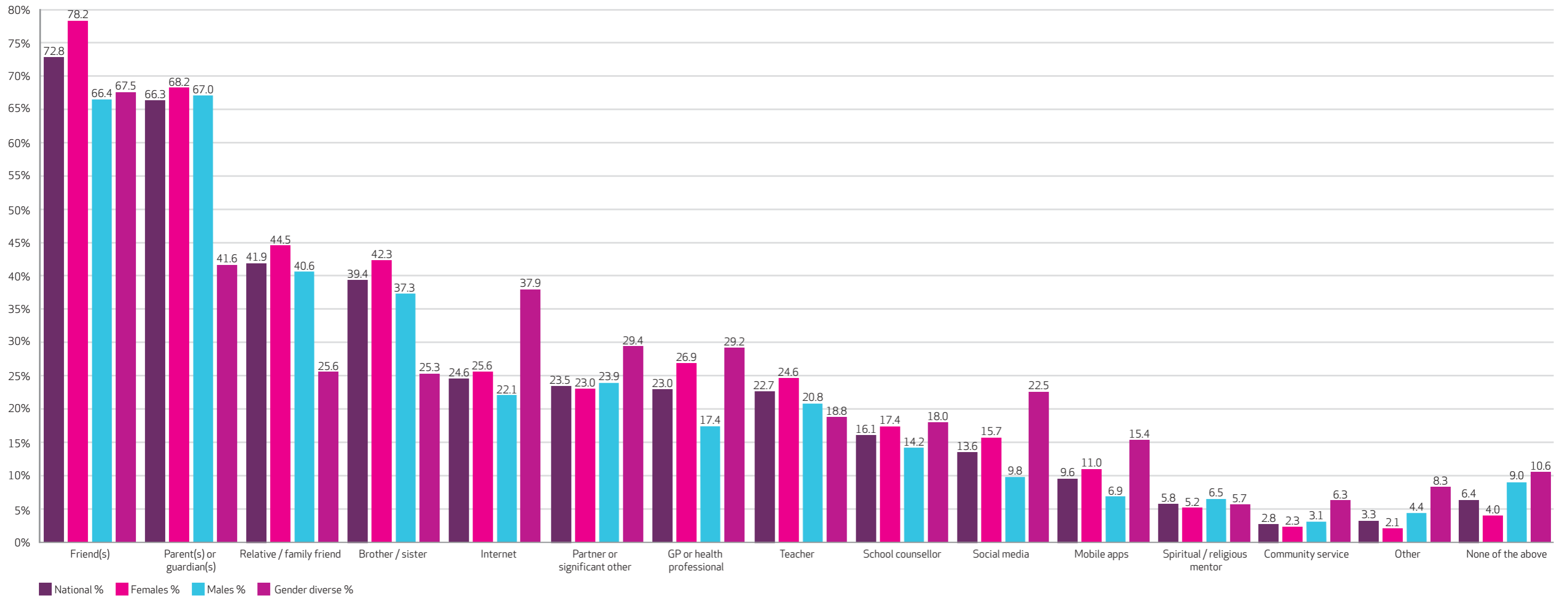
- A higher proportion of females than males indicated they would turn to their *friends* for help with important issues (78.2% compared with 66.4%). A similar proportion of females and males indicated that they would turn to their *parent(s) or guardian(s)* (68.2% compared with 67.0%). *Parent(s) or guardian(s)* and *friends* were at similar proportions as the top sources of support for males.
- A greater proportion of gender diverse young people turned to the *internet* for support with important issues in their lives (37.9% compared with 25.6% of females and 22.1% of males). They also sought support from their *parent(s) or guardian(s)* or *relative/family friend* in lower proportions than females and males.



“...I have been attending the local youth hub more than weekly for about a year now and it's really helped I've met wonderful young people and wonderful workers that are great to talk to about small problems.”

Female, 15, NSW

Figure 6.1: Where young people go for help with important issue



Base: All respondents. National n=19,162; Females n=10,197; Males n=7,379; Gender diverse n=671

In 2023 this was asked as a multiple response question for the first time. In prior years it was asked as yes/no response per item which may impact historical comparisons.

Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of national frequency. Examples included for *other* are based on responses to the free text box to specify *other*.

What activities are young people involved in?

Young people were asked to identify the activities they had been involved in over the past year from the list of options shown in Table 6.1.

- The top three activities for young people were *sports (as a participant)* (67.0%), *sports (as a spectator)* (49.7%) and *volunteer work* (40.7%).
- Close to one third (29.4%) of respondents reported they had participated in *arts/cultural/music groups/activities* in the past year. A similar proportion indicated they had taken part in *student leadership groups/activities* (28.6%).

Gender differences

- In line with national results, *sports (as a participant)*, *sports (as a spectator)* and *volunteer work* were the top three activities for both females and males. The top activity for gender diverse young people was *arts/cultural/music groups/activities* (44.6%), consistent with the top result in 2022 (Leung et al, 2022).
- Higher proportions of males than females reported taking part in *sports (as a participant)* (72.8% compared with 64.9%) and *sports (as a spectator)* (59.0% compared with 44.8%) in the past year.
- Conversely, higher proportions of females than males participated in *volunteer work* (44.2% compared with 36.9%), *arts/cultural/music groups/activities* (34.0% compared with 21.6%) and *student leadership groups/activities* (33.5% compared with 22.6%) in the past year.

Table 6.1: Activities young people were involved in during the past year

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
Sports (as a participant)	67.0	64.9	72.8	41.9
Sports (as a spectator)	49.7	44.8	59.0	30.8
Volunteer work (e.g. through a sports club, charity, religious organisation, school)	40.7	44.2	36.9	36.8
Arts / cultural / music groups / activities	29.4	34.0	21.6	44.6
Student leadership groups / activities	28.6	33.5	22.6	25.0
Youth groups / activities	18.2	17.9	17.8	28.5
Religious groups / activities	15.4	15.7	15.2	13.7
Environmental groups / activities	7.5	7.9	6.2	12.8
Political groups / activities	3.4	2.8	3.5	11.2
None of the above	12.4	12.1	11.8	18.0

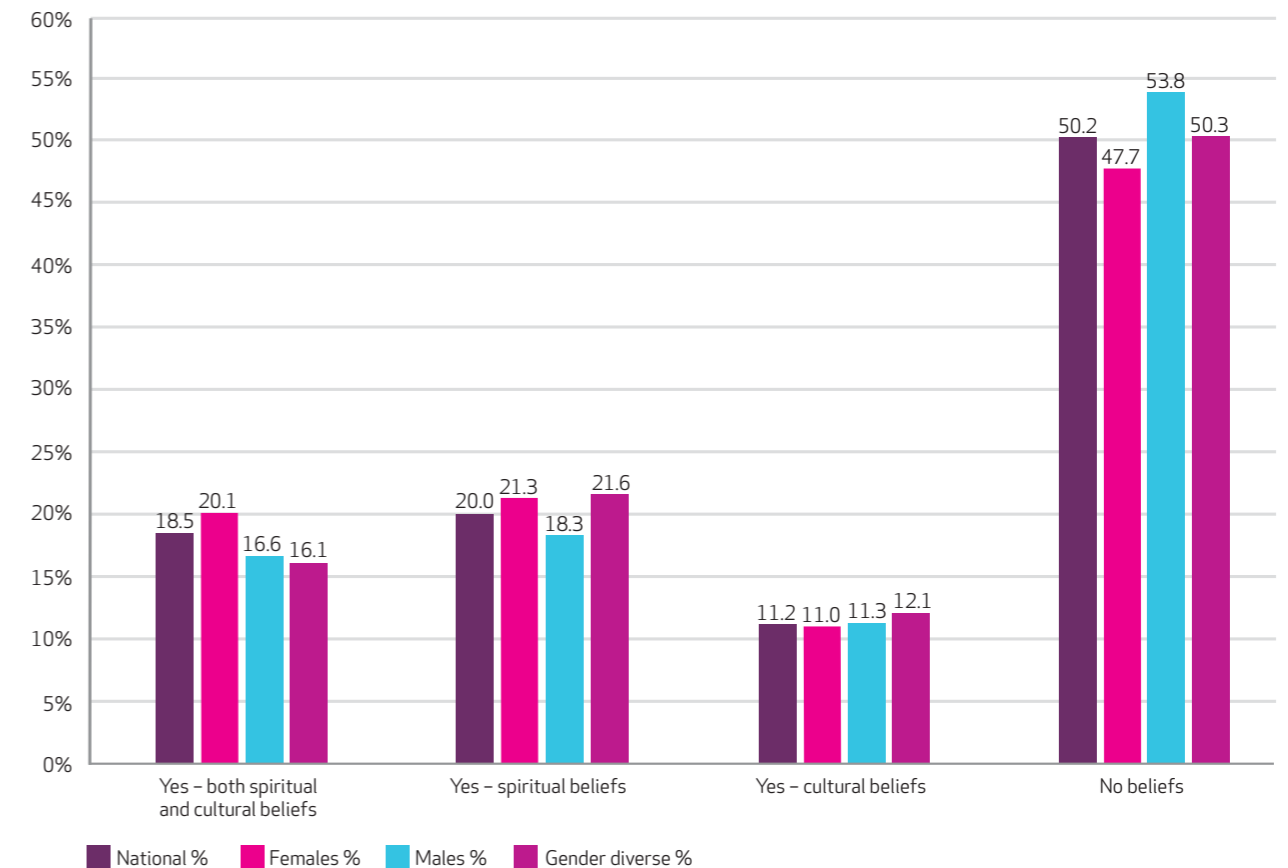
Base: All respondents. National n=19,065; Females n=10,139; Males n=7,350; Gender diverse n=671

Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of national frequency. In 2023 this was asked as a multiple response question for the first time. In prior years it was asked as yes/no response per item which may impact historical comparisons.

Do young people have cultural and spiritual beliefs?

- Close to one in five (18.5%) young people said they have *both spiritual and cultural beliefs*, with one in five (20.0%) reporting just *spiritual beliefs* and one in 10 (11.2%) just *cultural beliefs*. The remainder (50.2%) said they had *no spiritual or cultural beliefs*, as shown in Figure 6.2.
- A higher proportion of females said they had *both spiritual and cultural beliefs* (20.1% compared with 16.6% for males and 16.1% for gender diverse young people).

Figure 6.2: Whether young people have cultural and/or spiritual beliefs



Base: All respondents. National n=18,762; Females n=10,049; Males n=7,182; Gender diverse n=654



"I've been struggling with depression and anxiety. Bible study and building a relationship with God really helped me through my challenge."

Female, 16, NSW

What activities do young people find hard to do?

Respondents were presented with a range of activities shown in Table 6.2 and asked if they find them hard to do.

- Close to three in 10 young people said they find it hard to *turn to friends and family if you need help* and *fit in and socialise with everyone else* (29.3% and 28.5% respectively).
- Over one fifth (21.6%) said they find it hard to *make choices and feel independent*. A similar number felt it is hard to *turn to services/organisations if you need help* (21.1%).
- A greater proportion of females than males said they find each of the activities hard to do. However, a larger proportion of gender diverse young people reported they find each listed activities hard to do, particularly *fitting in and socialising with everyone else* (52.4% compared with 32.6% for females and 20.4% for males) and *turn to friends and family if you need help* (50.4% compared with 33.3% for females and 21.3% for males).

Table 6.2: Activities young people find hard to do

	National %	Females %	Males %	Gender diverse %
Turn to friends and family if you need help	29.3	33.3	21.3	50.4
Fit in and socialise with everyone else (at school, work or socially)	28.5	32.6	20.4	52.4
Make choices and feel independent	21.6	25.6	14.3	34.4
Turn to services/organisations if you need help	21.1	24.0	15.2	41.1
Do everyday activities as young people your age usually do	19.2	21.5	13.4	42.7
Do things in public places with friends (e.g. go to shopping centres)	16.0	16.6	12.6	39.8
Travel around the community (e.g. using footpaths)	9.1	10.2	6.4	18.3
None of the above	45.5	38.7	57.7	21.4

Base: All respondents. National n=18,452; Females n=9,878; Males n=7,068; Gender diverse n=649

Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of national frequency.



How do young people feel about their community?

Young people were asked the extent to which they agree with three statements about their community as shown in Figure 6.3.

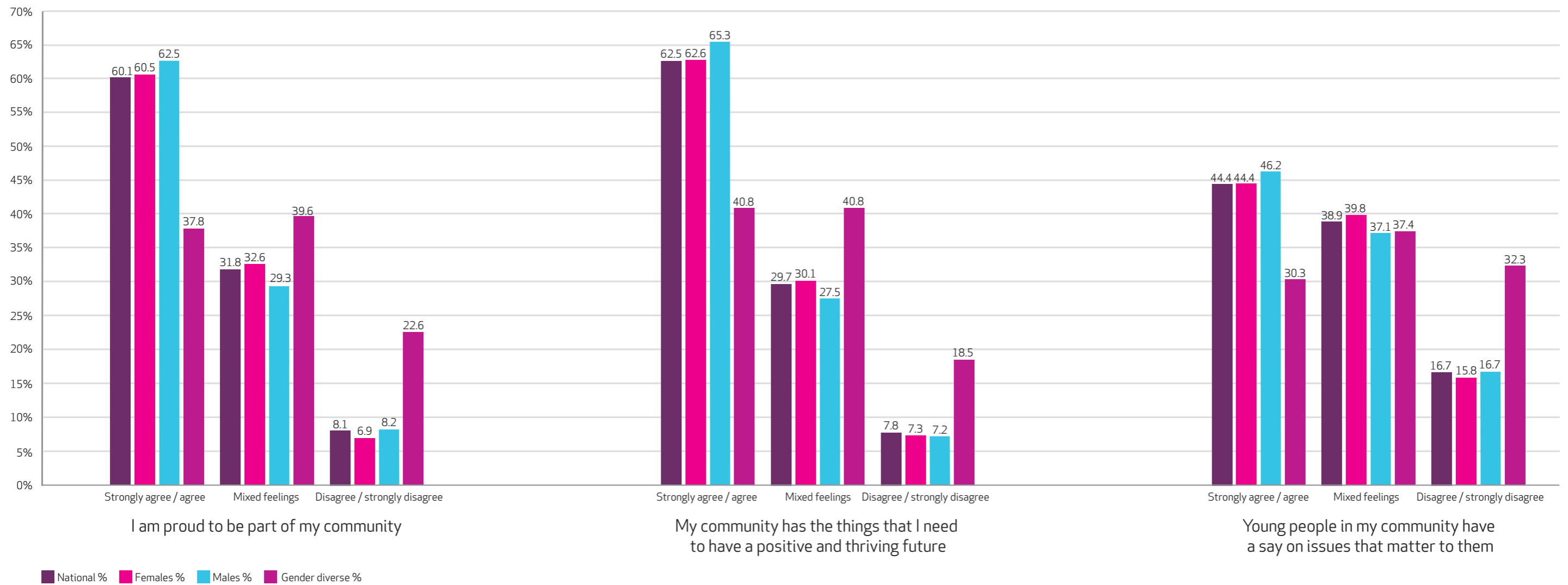
- Six in 10 (60.1%) young people *strongly agreed or agreed* with the statement *I am proud to be part of my community*. Just over six in 10 (62.5%) also agreed that *my community has the things that I need to have a positive and thriving future*.
- The statement *young people in my community have a say on issues that matter to them* had lower levels of agreement than the prior statements, with 44.4% of respondents selecting *agree or strongly agree*. It also had higher levels of disagreement with 16.7% of young people *disagreeing or strongly disagreeing* that young people have a say.



“...I have met the challenge of getting more involved in the community and succeeded. I currently participate in several clubs and groups at school, including even more co-curricular activities and extra-curricular studies. I am currently very happy and less stressed with life.”

Male, 17, ACT

Figure 6.3: Young people and the feelings they have about their community



Base: All respondents. Sample sizes vary per statement.

UNFAIR TREATMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

Have young people been treated unfairly?

As shown in Figure 7.1, over one quarter (26.6%) of young people said that they had experienced unfair treatment or discrimination in the last year.

Young people who reported being treated unfairly or discriminated against in the past year were then asked to identify reasons for being treated unfairly from a list of suggested items as shown in Figure 7.2. Among these respondents, the top three reasons given for the unfair treatment were their *physical appearance* (36.4%), *race/cultural background* (34.6%) and *gender* (30.0%).

Gender differences

Experiences of unfair treatment or discrimination were reported by three in five (58.9%) gender diverse young people. Females were more likely than males to have felt they were treated unfairly in the last year (28.5% compared with 20.5%).

Among the young people who had been treated unfairly in the past year:

- Close to three times the proportion of females than males had been treated unfairly due to their *gender* (34.5% compared with 11.3% of males).
- A higher proportion of males than females reported they had been treated unfairly due to their *race/cultural background* (41.3% compared with 32.7%).
- Over two thirds of gender diverse young people felt they had been treated unfairly due to their *gender* (68.4%) or their *sexuality* (66.6%). Unfair treatment due to *mental health* was also higher among gender diverse young people (39.5% compared to 24.4% for females and 17.7% for males).

Figure 7.1: Unfair treatment or discrimination in the last year

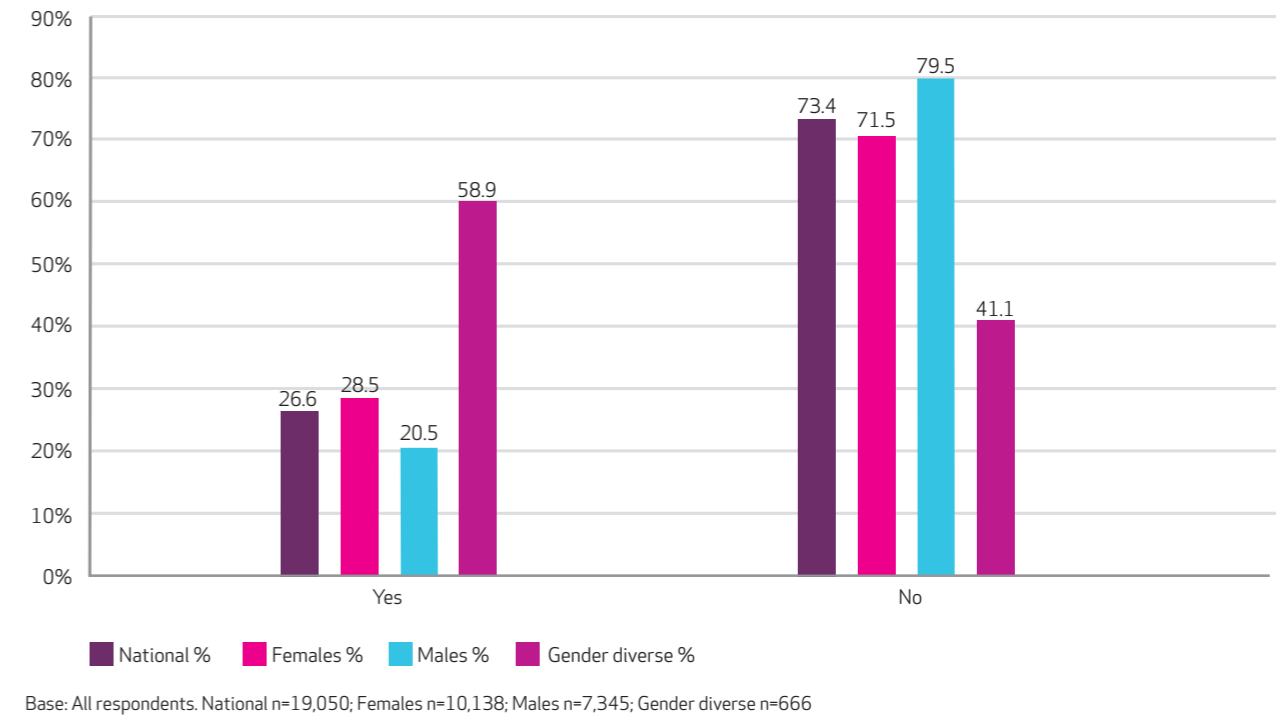
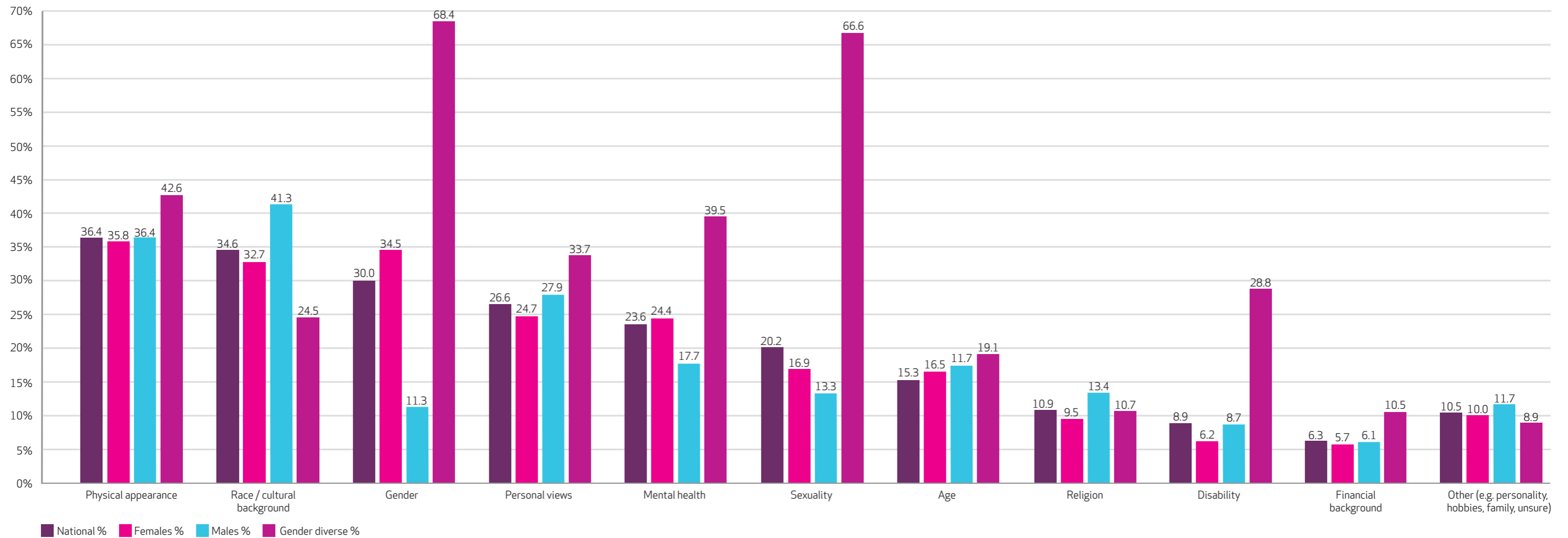
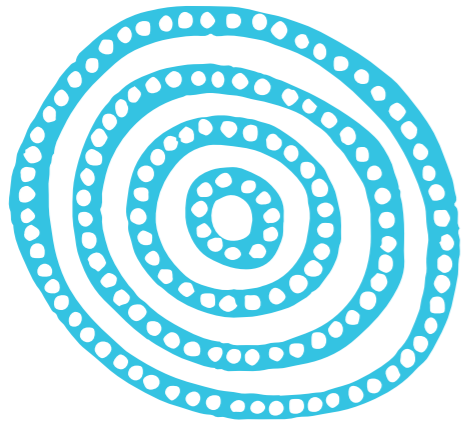


Figure 7.2: Reason(s) for being treated unfairly in the last year



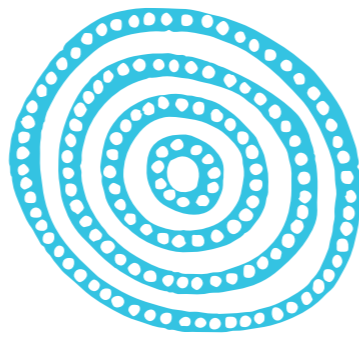


Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

- ▶ Profile of respondents
- ▶ Personal challenges and concerns
- ▶ National concerns
- ▶ Education and employment
- ▶ Wellbeing
- ▶ Support and Connectedness
- ▶ Unfair treatment and discrimination



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander summary



PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

A total of 820 (4.4%) respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Of this total, 661 (3.5%) respondents identified as Aboriginal, while 71 (0.4%) identified as Torres Strait Islander (the remaining 0.5% identified as both).

State and territory distribution

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents came from across Australia, with one quarter (26.6%) residing in NSW and one in five in QLD (22.2%). Figure 8.1 indicates the number and proportion of responses from each Australian state and territory.

Locality

Close to half (44.1%) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were living in regional areas, as defined by the Australia Bureau of Statistic localities (*Australian Statistical Geography Standard*, 2021). Two in five (40.0%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people resided in a major city and the remaining 15.9% lived in a postcode classified as both a major city and a regional area.

Gender

Close to half (46.9%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were male, 41.2% were female, 10.8% identified as gender diverse and 1.0% preferred not to say their gender.

Cultural background

Three in 10 (30.4%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported a particular cultural or ethnic group with which they identified strongly, most commonly Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or specific Indigenous groups.

One in five (22.0%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported speaking a language other than English at home. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages were most commonly spoken, followed by French and Creole.

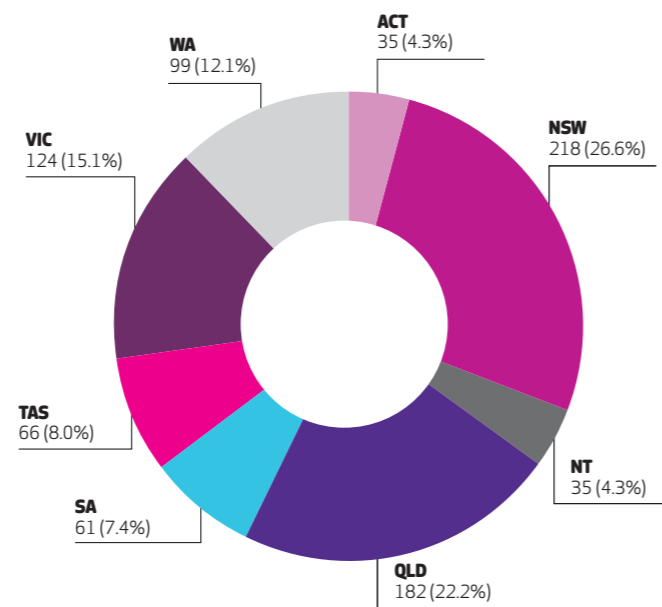
Disability

One in five (19.5%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents identified as living with disability. A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females reported living with disability (16.2% compared with 11.5%). The most frequently cited disabilities were autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Mental health

One quarter (27.1%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents identified as having a mental health condition. A greater proportion of female than male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported living with a mental health condition (28.0% compared with 17.9%). The most frequently cited mental health conditions were anxiety disorders and depressive disorders.

Figure 8.1: Proportion of respondents by state/territory



PERSONAL CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS

Biggest Personal Challenges

Respondents were asked three questions to answer in their own words about the biggest personal challenge they faced over the past year, what they did to deal with that challenge and what more could have been done to help them.

As shown in Table 8.1, the three most common personal challenges cited by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents related to school (36.0%), interpersonal relationships (20.1%) and mental health (16.8%).

Among school challenges, workload issues were the most common challenge (14.1%) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. The pressure to achieve good grades and issues relating to teachers were also reported.

This group sought out guidance and support from friends and family to help deal with their school challenges, as well as getting help from their teachers or turning to recreational activities. When asked what more could have helped them, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people stated that more understanding from teachers and studying harder would have helped them address their school related challenges.

"Teachers could possibly stop rushing and putting more stress on students." Female, 16, QLD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents who had noted challenges with interpersonal relationships, over half (54.9%) mentioned family challenges. More than one in five cited challenges with their friends (21.8%).

These young people either reached out to friends and family or distracted themselves through recreational activities to manage these challenges. When asked what more could have helped them, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people stated they should communicate more and talk to someone about the interpersonal relationship issues they faced.

"The ability to properly identify the issue, ask for help, and construct a way to work around, remove, or confront it." Gender diverse, 15, WA, Aboriginal

Of the challenges relating to mental health, stress (16.0%), anxiety (13.4%) and depression (10.1%) were the most common issues mentioned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people tackled mental health challenges by leaning on informal support networks like friends and family or by doing physical activities. They said that what could have helped them more is talking about their issues with someone.

"Accept that it's okay for men to be facing challenges in their life instead of dealing with them in silence. Forcing them to believe that men shouldn't take care of their mental health, and instead help men with the problems that they may be facing, however, I can understand that a majority of men may lie about their mental health in order to make sure that people don't worry about them (of course speaking from personal experience), and avoid therapy but instead men should be free to talk about problems they may be facing and that it's normal." Male, 16, VIC, Aboriginal

Gender differences

A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males mentioned challenges across the top three categories of school, interpersonal relationships and mental health. Meanwhile, a higher proportion of males than females said they were unsure or did not have any challenges (10.4% of males compared with 6.1% of females).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males both reported using informal and formal support networks and recreational activities to help them.

When asked what else could have helped them, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females stated more support from family, friends and professionals could have helped them address their challenges, while more males were unsure of what kind of help they could have sought out. Similar numbers of females and males were open to more school-based supports.

Table 8.1: Biggest personal challenge experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
School related challenges	36.0	43.6	32.9	49.9
Workload issues	14.1			23.8
Grades	5.1			9.7
School staff	3.9			2.1
Learning difficulties	1.6			1.8
School (general)	85.5			85.9
Interpersonal relationship challenges	20.1	25.4	15.5	21.6
Family	54.9			51.7
Friends	21.8			26.9
Abuse, conflict and very negative experiences	12.0			9.9
Pet	5.6			2.7
Significant other	0.7			2.2
Interpersonal relationship (general)	11.3			22.8
Mental health challenges	16.8	20.7	11.1	24.8
Stress	16.0			26.6
Anxiety	13.4			17.4
Depression	10.1			9.0
Suicide and self-harm	7.6			3.3
Self-esteem	6.7			8.4
Alcohol and other drugs	5.9			1.2
Eating Disorder	5.0			3.9
Addiction (not including alcohol and other drugs)	4.2			0.9
Diagnosed disorders	3.4			4.2
Mental health (general)	50.4			49.3

Table 8.1: Biggest personal challenge experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (continued)

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
Financial and housing challenges*	5.5	6.4	5.7	4.1
Other challenges	16.1	17.9	14.6	17.1
General health	25.4			20.1
Moving to a new environment	24.6			25.8
Motivation	17.5			29.0
Self-identity	11.4			5.5
Bullying	4.4			5.0
COVID-19	2.6			7.4
Discrimination	2.6			1.8
Other (includes various low frequency challenges not listed above)	14.9			8.2
Not sure/no challenges identified	9.3	6.1	10.4	5.6

Note: Items ranked high to low according to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses for top-level theme. The percentage figure for the top-level themes represents its proportion amongst the total responses for this question. Each of the top-level themes is made of the sub-themes listed below it. The percentage for the sub-themes represents its proportion amongst corresponding top-level theme. Gender sub-theme data is removed due to small sample. Figures for gender diverse people has not been displayed due to the low number of gender diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The percentages may not total 100% as responses may fall into multiple themes.
* Interpret with caution. Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that cited Financial and Housing Challenges was under 100 and too small to be meaningfully broken down into sub-themes.



“The biggest personal challenge I have faced is keeping up with schoolwork while having to do my school-based traineeship.”

Female, 15, NT, Torres Strait Islander

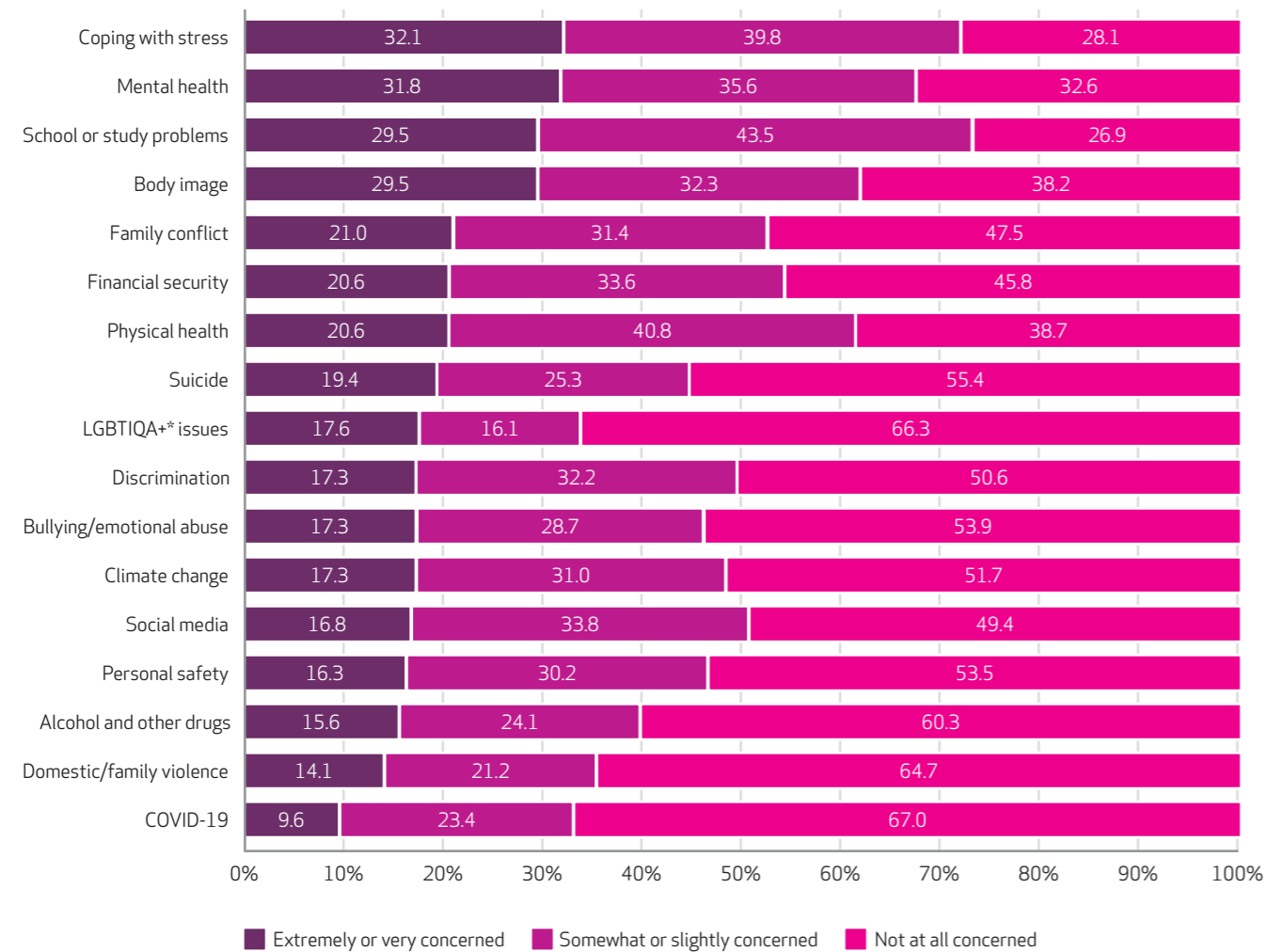
Personal Concerns

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were asked the extent of their concern about a number of issues over the past year (see Figure 8.2). The top personal concerns were *coping with stress* (32.1%), *mental health* (31.8%) and *school or study problems* (29.5%).

Gender differences

- The top concerns for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were *coping with stress* (44.7%), *body image* (40.9%) and *mental health* (38.9%).
- Whereas the top concerns for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males were *mental health* (21.0%), *school or study problems* (20.8%) and *physical health* (17.7%).

Figure 8.2: Issues of personal concern to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people



Base: All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents. Sample sizes vary per row.

Note: Items ranked high to low according to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses for *extremely or very concerned* for each item. * Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual issues.

Table 8.2a: Issues of personal concern to female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females	Extremely or very concerned %	Somewhat or slightly concerned %	Not at all concerned %
Coping with stress	44.7	44.7	10.7
Body image	40.9	36.8	22.3
Mental health	38.9	44.4	16.7
School or study problems	36.4	46.5	17.1
Family conflict	27.6	35.4	37.0
Financial security	20.9	42.4	36.7
Physical health	18.9	55.3	25.8
Bullying/emotional abuse	18.6	39.1	42.3
Suicide	18.6	34.5	46.9
Climate change	16.6	39.4	44.1
Discrimination	15.7	42.9	41.4
Social media	15.4	48.4	36.2
Personal safety	14.3	41.0	44.8
Domestic/family violence	13.7	26.0	60.3
Alcohol and other drugs	11.9	33.3	54.7
LGBTIQA+* issues	7.3	23.0	69.7
COVID-19	6.3	32.3	61.4

Base: All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female respondents. Sample sizes vary per row.

Note: Items ranked high to low according to the female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses for *extremely or very concerned* for each item. * Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual issues.



"The biggest personal experience I faced last/ this year was my mental health, I wasn't in the greatest headspace due to schoolwork being stressful, not having a social life."

Female, 16, SA, Aboriginal

Table 8.2b: Issues of personal concern to male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males	Extremely or very concerned %	Somewhat or slightly concerned %	Not at all concerned %
Mental health	21.0	35.1	43.9
School or study problems	20.8	46.0	33.2
Physical health	17.7	32.4	49.9
Coping with stress	17.5	41.7	40.8
Financial security	15.9	31.0	53.2
Suicide	15.1	19.2	65.7
LGBTIQA+* issues	15.1	12.1	72.9
Body image	14.6	32.2	53.2
Family conflict	13.2	28.5	58.4
Alcohol and other drugs	13.1	18.6	68.3
Personal safety	12.9	24.2	62.9
Social media	12.8	25.6	61.6
Climate change	12.3	26.0	61.7
Discrimination	11.8	27.3	60.9
Bullying/emotional abuse	11.7	22.3	65.9
Domestic/family violence	9.9	18.1	72.0
COVID-19	7.7	18.0	74.3

Base: All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male respondents. Sample sizes vary per row.

Note: Items ranked high to low according to the male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses for *extremely or very concerned* for each item. * Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual issues.

National Concerns

When asked about the top issues in Australia today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people cited *equity and discrimination* (27.5%), *the economy and financial matters* (24.4%), *the environment* (23.3%) and *mental health* (20.7%), as shown in Table 8.3.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents have consistently noted *the environment, equity and discrimination* and *mental health* in the top four as important issues for Australia since 2021. In 2021 and 2022, *COVID-19* was part of the top four, but this year it was *the economy and financial matters*.
- The top issue of national concern was consistent among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males (*equity and discrimination*), however *mental health* was the second top issue for females and *the economy and financial matters* was the second top for males.

Table 8.3: Most important issues in Australia today among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2023 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females 2023 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males 2023 %	Non-Indigenous respondents 2023 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2022 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2021 %
Equity and discrimination	27.5	34.0	23.6	31.7	27.5	32.5
The economy and financial matters	24.4	24.3	23.3	31.5	17.4	8.1
The environment	23.3	28.3	20.1	45.1	33.6	23.4
Mental health	20.7	30.0	15.6	30.8	30.1	29.0
Alcohol & drugs	16.8	15.8	19.1	12.0	13.0	13.0
Crime, safety and violence	16.3	21.5	14.9	17.8	12.4	10.4
Homelessness / housing	14.9	19.0	12.5	18.7	12.6	8.5
LGBTIQA+* issues	9.8	4.9	11.1	4.8	6.2	6.5
Politics	8.7	6.1	10.4	7.1	8.6	6.4
Bullying	7.9	12.6	6.3	5.6	7.0	5.7

Base: All responses. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=644; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=247; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=288; Non-Indigenous n=14,679

Note: Items are listed in order of 2023 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses. Analysis of this question was conducted using a different methodology in 2023 and 2022 compared to 2021 which may impact comparisons. * Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual issues. Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual issues.

“Mid last year was struggling a lot with my mental health and just couldn't handle anything at that time so I had a 2-3 week leave from school!”

Male, 16, ACT, Aboriginal



EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Education

Over four in five (82.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were studying, with 69.0% studying full-time and 13.1% studying part-time (see Table 8.4). Among these respondents, over half (51.6%) were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with their studies and 16.0% were *dissatisfied* or *very dissatisfied* (see Table 8.5).

After leaving school, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' top three plans were to *go to university* (42.7%), *get a job* (41.6%) and *travel/gap year* (24.9%), as shown in Figure 8.3. Close to half of respondents (47.0%) were *extremely* or *very confident* in achieving their work/study goals. Despite this, more than two in five (42.5%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people felt there were barriers to achieving their work/study goals. As shown in Table 8.7, the top three barriers were *mental health* (45.1%), *financial difficulty* (32.6%) and *academic ability* (30.0%).

Table 8.4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's participation in education.

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
Studying full-time	69.0	72.8	68.6	87.4
Studying part-time	13.1	9.0	16.3	7.0
Not studying	17.9	18.3	15.2	5.7

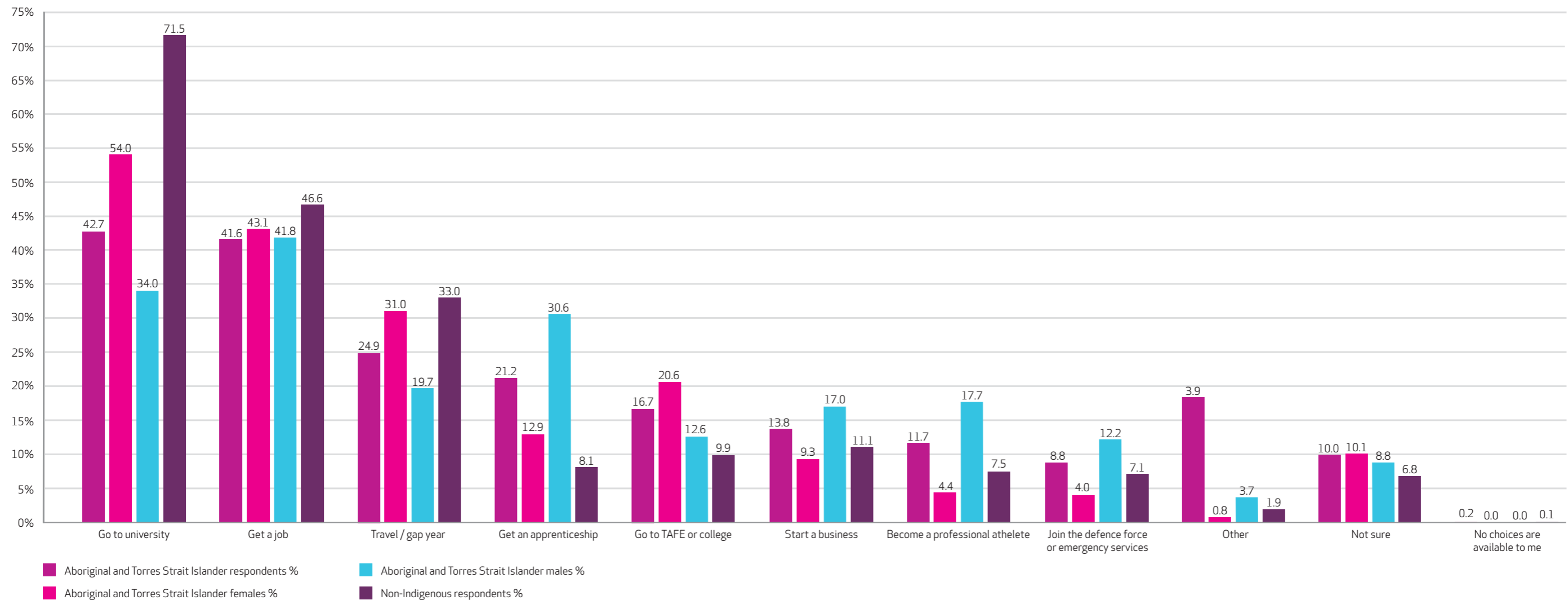
Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=817; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=323; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=369; Non-Indigenous n=17,937

Table 8.5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's satisfaction with studies

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
Very satisfied or satisfied	51.6	57.0	48.7	63.8
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	32.4	32.4	33.3	27.6
Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	16.0	10.5	18.0	8.6

Base: Respondents currently studying. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=651; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=256; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=306; Non-Indigenous n=16,550

Figure 8.3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples' plans after leaving school

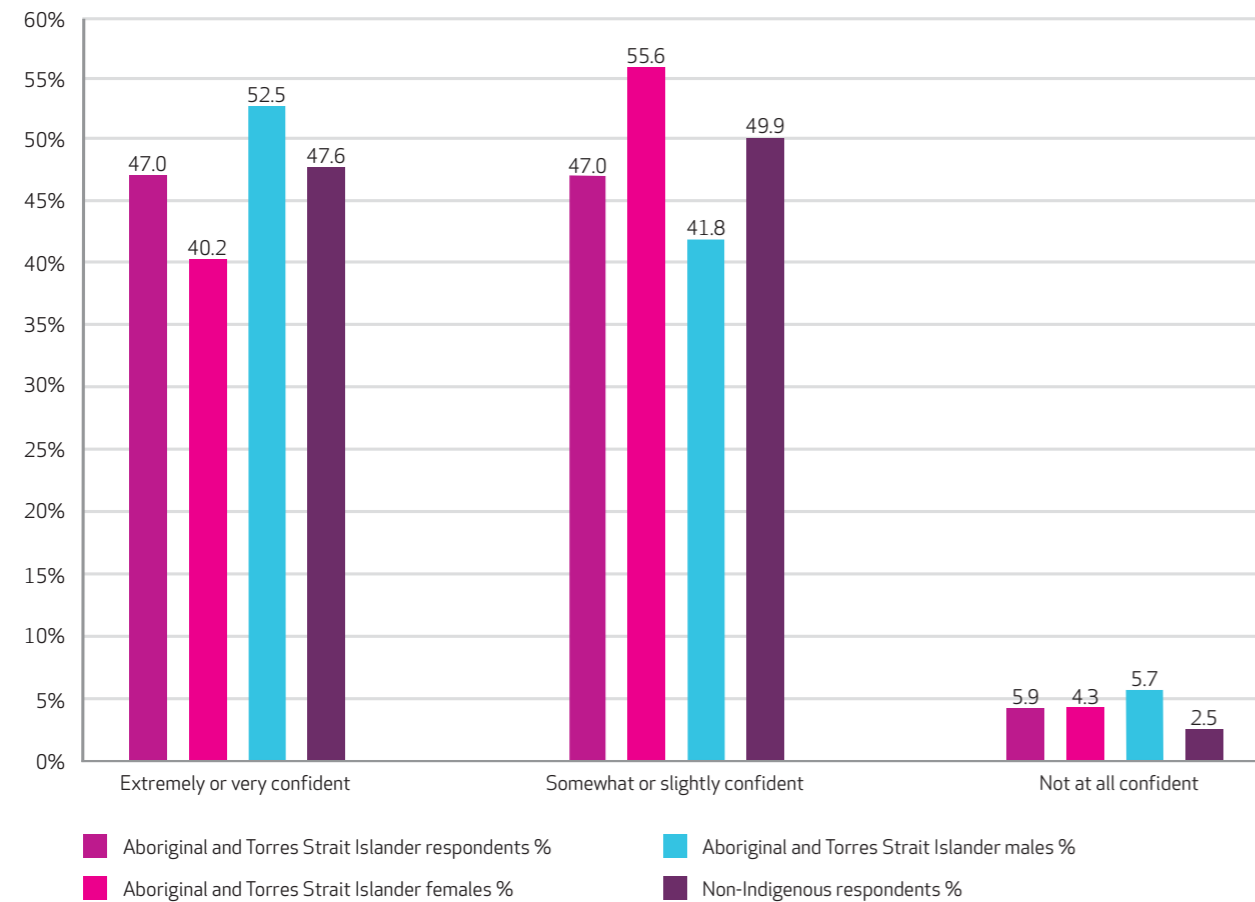


Base: Respondents studying at school or equivalent. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=623; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=248; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=294; Non-Indigenous n=16,333
 Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses.

Gender differences

- A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males reported *studying part-time* (16.3% compared with 9.0% of females), while a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females reported *not studying* (18.3% compared with 15.2% of males).
- Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, a greater proportion of females were *satisfied* or *very satisfied* with their studies (57.0% compared with 48.7% of males).
- The top two most common after school plans were the same for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females (*go to university and get a job*), but third for males was to *get an apprenticeship* (30.6%) and *travel/gap year* (31.0%) third for females.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males were more likely than females to be *very or extremely confident* in achieving their work/study goals (52.5% compared with 40.2%).
- A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females reported *mental health* as a barrier to achieving their work/study goals (56.8% compared to 33.6% of males), while a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males reported *discrimination* as a barrier to achieving their work/study goals (15.0% compared to 5.3% of females).

Figure 8.4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's confidence in achieving study/work goals



Base: Respondents studying at school or equivalent. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=593; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=234; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=282; Non-Indigenous n=15,968

Table 8.6: Are there any barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people achieving their study/work goals

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %
Yes	42.5
No	57.5

Base: Respondents studying at school or equivalent.

Table 8.7: Are there any barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people achieving their study/work goals

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %*	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
Mental health	45.1	56.8	33.6	42.7
Financial difficulty	32.6	36.8	29.9	29.0
Academic ability	30.0	32.6	27.1	37.0
Where you live	23.6	18.9	27.1	16.0
Family responsibilities	21.5	24.2	18.7	12.7
Transport	20.2	18.9	20.6	11.2
Lack of school support	18.9	16.8	18.7	9.3
Lack of jobs	17.2	15.8	15.0	12.5
Physical health	17.2	13.7	18.7	9.2
Lack of information	16.3	15.8	14.0	15.6
Lack of family support	15.5	17.9	12.1	8.9
Discrimination	14.2	5.3	15.0	6.7
Admission / job requirements	12.9	8.4	13.1	17.1
Caring responsibilities	9.4	7.4	10.3	4.9
Cultural responsibilities	7.3	4.2	8.4	2.5
COVID-19	6.0	2.1	7.5	3.1
Other	15.5	5.3	18.7	7.3

Base: Respondents who are studying and reported there are barriers to achieving their work/study goals. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=233; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=95; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=107; Non-Indigenous n=5,598

Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses.

*Use caution in interpretation of female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander results due to sample size (n=95).

"The biggest challenge I've faced this year has been mostly relating to stress and worries and doubts about my future career and life after school."

Male, 17, TAS, Aboriginal



Employment

Half (50.0%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were in paid employment. One third (32.9%) were *not in paid employment, but looking for work* with the remaining *not in paid employment, and not looking for work* (17.1%). As shown in Table 8.8, over two in five (43.0%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported they were employed casually.

Of those in paid employment, over nine in ten (92.0%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported working part-time (see Table 8.9). Over six in ten (61.3%) were *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with their job, as shown in Figure 8.5.

Gender differences

- A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females reported being neither *satisfied nor dissatisfied* with their job (28.7% compared with 16.7% of males), while a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males reported being *dissatisfied or very dissatisfied* with their job (18.3% compared with 9.6% of females).

Table 8.8: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's participation in paid employment

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
Permanent employee	7.0	4.0	6.8	4.4
Casual employee	43.0	45.0	43.5	48.5
Not in paid employment, looking for work	32.9	34.2	35.6	26.2
Not in paid employment, NOT looking for work	17.1	16.8	14.1	20.8

Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=817; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=322; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=368; Non-Indigenous n=17,945



"My biggest challenge would have to be juggling schoolwork, extracurricular and personal issues at the same time. Keeping up with school whilst also having to deal with things like sick family members or other personal events can be exceedingly difficult."

Male, 17, WA, Aboriginal

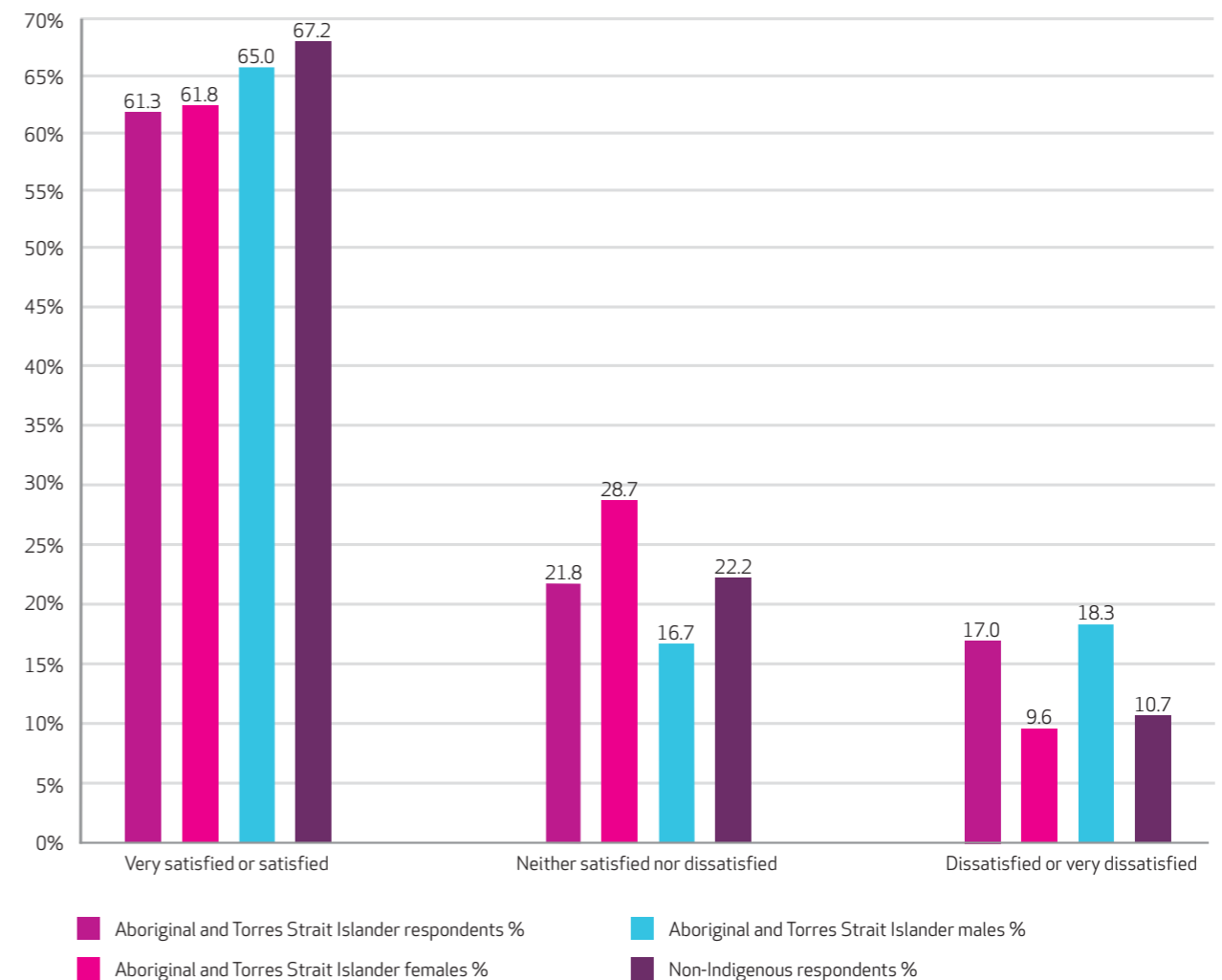
Table 8.9: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's employment type

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
Working full-time	8.0	1.9	5.6	1.0
Working part-time	92.0	98.1	94.4	99.0

Base: Respondents in paid employment. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=398; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=157; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=179; Non-Indigenous n=9,306

Note: Part-time employment is considered to be less than 35 hours per week, while full-time employment is considered to be 35 hours or more.

Figure 8.5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's satisfaction with their job



Base: Respondents in paid employment. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=400; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=157; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=180; Non-Indigenous n=9,304

"Changing jobs and being denied school-based apprenticeships because of the school I am at and then watching other students get accepted."

Female, 16, VIC, Aboriginal



WELLBEING

Three in 10 (30.3%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people rated their mental health as *excellent* or *very good*, while two in five (40.9%) rated their mental health as *fair* or *poor* (see Figure 8.6).

As shown in Table 8.10, almost half (49.1%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported they were *completely* or *mostly in control* of their life, while one in six (16.9%) felt they had *almost no control* or *no control* over their lives. Close to one third (32.4%) indicated that they experienced high psychological distress (see Figure 8.7) and three in 10 (29.7%) felt lonely *all or most of the time* (see Table 8.11).

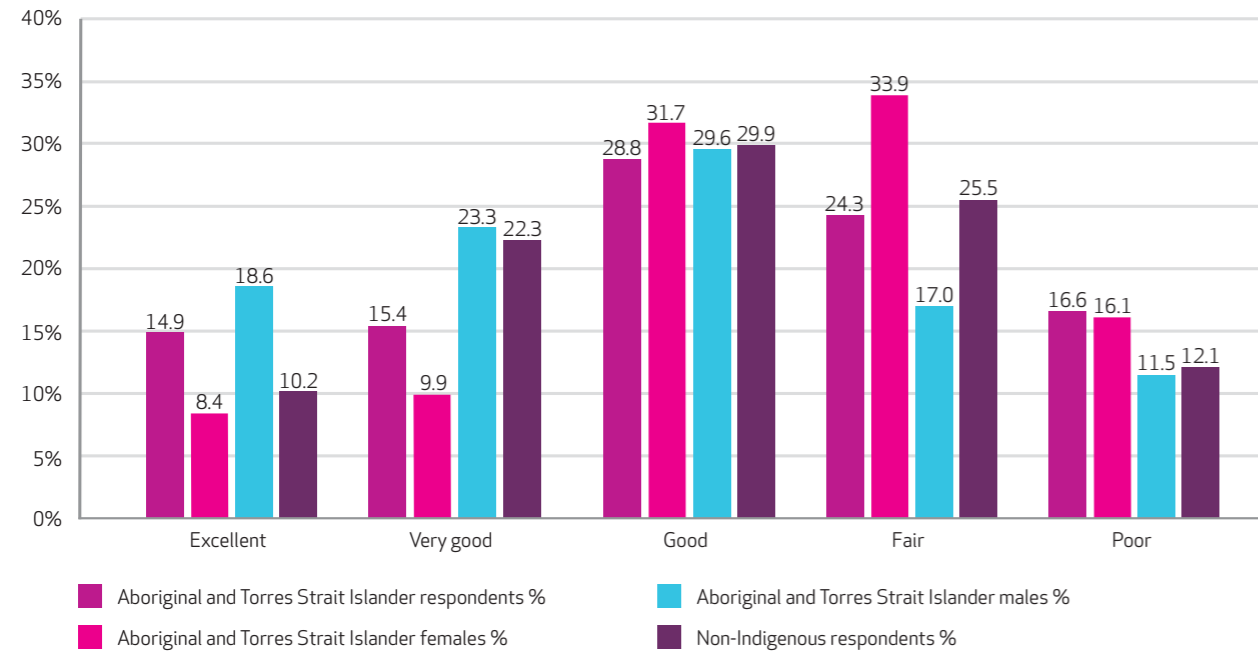
Two in five (40.2%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people rated their family's ability to get along with each other as *excellent* or *very good*, while one third (33.1%) rated it as *poor* or *fair* (see Figure 8.8).

As shown in Table 8.12, over two in five (42.2%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported feeling *positive* or *very positive* when thinking about the future. This is lower than in 2022 and 2021 when 45.9% and 51.8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported feeling *positive* or *very positive*.

Gender differences

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males rated themselves more highly than females on most wellbeing questions in the survey. For example, higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males reported low psychological distress (50.4% compared with 29.4% of females). However, a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males reported having *no control* over their lives (7.5% compared with 2.9% of females) and feeling lonely *all of the time* (11.9% compared with 8.7% of females).

Figure 8.6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's overall mental health and wellbeing



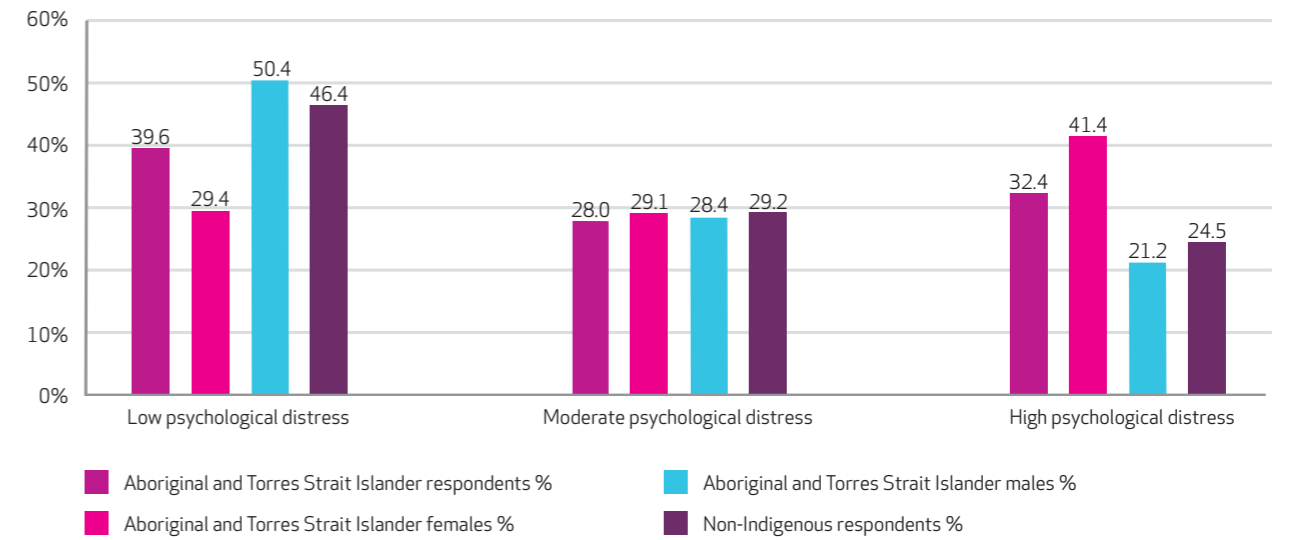
Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=812; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=322; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=365; Non-Indigenous n=17,893

Table 8.10: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's level of control over their life

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
Complete control	13.8	6.3	17.7	9.3
Mostly in control	35.3	34.6	41.0	47.0
Some control	34.1	42.9	29.6	34.1
Almost no control	9.3	13.3	4.2	7.7
No control	7.6	2.9	7.5	2.0

Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=800; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=315; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=361; Non-Indigenous n=17,793

Figure 8.7: Level of psychological distress in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people



Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=778; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=309; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=349; Non-Indigenous n=17,453
 Note: Psychological distress measured using the Kessler 6. Cut-off scores used for categories of psychological distress are as follows: low = 0 to 7, moderate = 8 to 12 and high = 13 to 24 (Hilton et al, 2008). These cut-off scores are used by the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

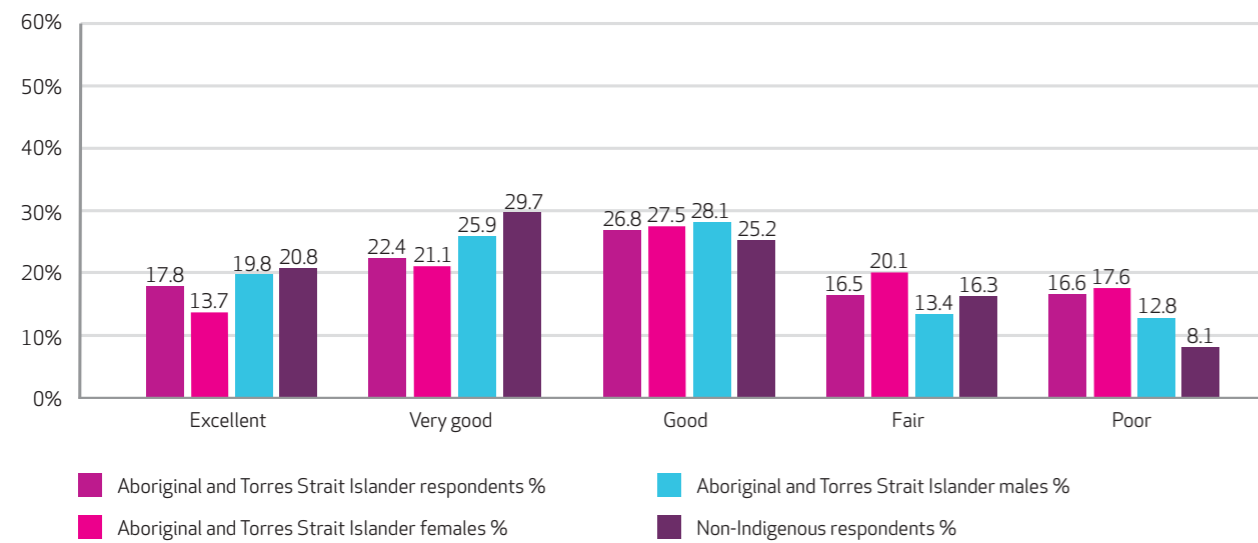


Table 8.11: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's level of loneliness

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
None of the time	19.3	12.8	24.3	17.1
A little of the time	24.3	22.4	27.6	31.5
Some of the time	26.7	34.3	23.8	31.1
Most of the time	16.8	21.8	12.4	16.6
All of the time	12.9	8.7	11.9	3.7

Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=798; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=312; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=362; Non-Indigenous n=17,809

Figure 8.8: Ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's family to get along with one another



Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=796; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=313; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=359; Non-Indigenous n=17,757



"...I was diagnosed with depression a few months ago but I've been struggling with it for a few years now. I'm also really worried about my future because the world is very messed up right now and previous generations have really screwed us over."

Gender not specified, 16, ACT, Aboriginal

Table 8.12: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's feelings about the future

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2023 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females 2023 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males 2023 %	Non-Indigenous respondents 2023 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2022 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2021 %
Very positive or positive	42.2	39.2	46.5	50.5	45.9	51.8
Neither positive nor negative	37.3	42.7	35.7	33.2	36.3	32.4
Negative or very negative	20.5	18.2	17.7	16.3	17.8	15.9

Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=799; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=314; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=361; Non-Indigenous n=17,780

"In the past year my biggest personal challenge I have faced has been my work and study to social life balance. Trying to study, have 2 jobs and play sport makes it hard for me to find time to see friends or have time for myself."

Female, 16, QLD, Aboriginal



SUPPORT AND CONNECTEDNESS

As shown in Figure 8.9, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's top three sources of support for important issues were *friend(s)* (58.9%), *parent(s) or guardian(s)* (54.3%) and *relative/family friend* (40.6%).

The top activities that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were involved in during the last year were *sports (as a participant)* (58.7%), *sports (as a spectator)* (44.8%) and *volunteer work* (34.1%) (see Table 8.13).

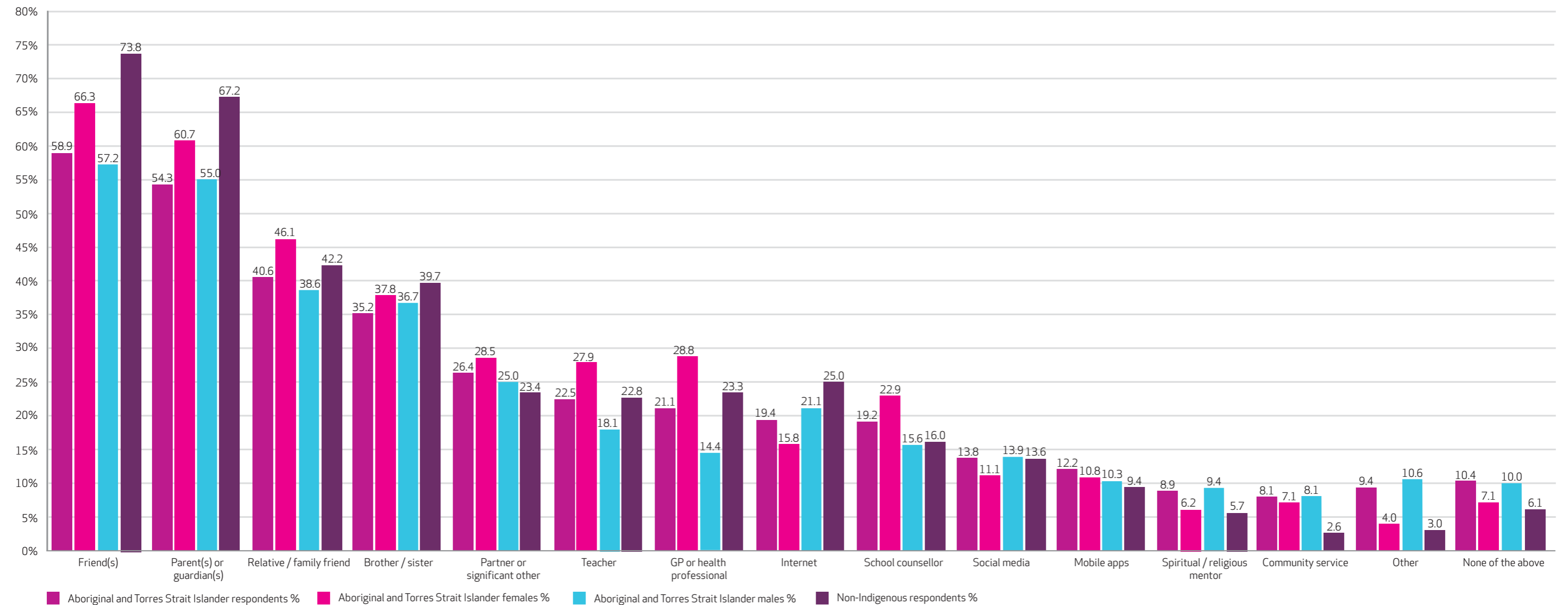
Similar to their non-Indigenous peers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people most commonly said it was hard to *fit in and socialise with everyone else* and *turn to friends and family if they need help*.

Close to half (46.7%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people *agreed or strongly agreed* with the statement *I am proud to be part of my community* (see Figure 8.11). A similar proportion (45.3%) *agreed or strongly agreed* with the statement *my community has the things that I need to have a positive and thriving future*, however, only one third of respondents (34.1%) *agreed or strongly agreed* with the statement *young people in my community have a say on issues that matter to them*.

Gender differences

- *Friends and parent(s) or guardian(s)* were the most commonly identified sources of support for important issues for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males. A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females identified they could turn to a *GP or health professional* (28.8% compared with 14.4% of males), *teacher* (27.9% compared with 18.1% of males) or *school counsellor* (22.9% compared with 15.6% of males).
- As shown in Table 8.13, the top three activities both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males were involved in were *sports (as a participant)*, *sports (as a spectator)* and *volunteer work*. A higher proportion of males involved in *sports (as a participant)* and *sports (as a spectator)*, while a greater proportion of females than males were involved in *volunteer work*. Higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females reported that they find it hard to do all the activities listed in Table 8.14. The exception was *travel around the community* where the difference between females and males was not statistically significant.

Figure 8.9: Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people go for support with important issues



Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=806; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=323; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=360; Non-Indigenous n=17,903

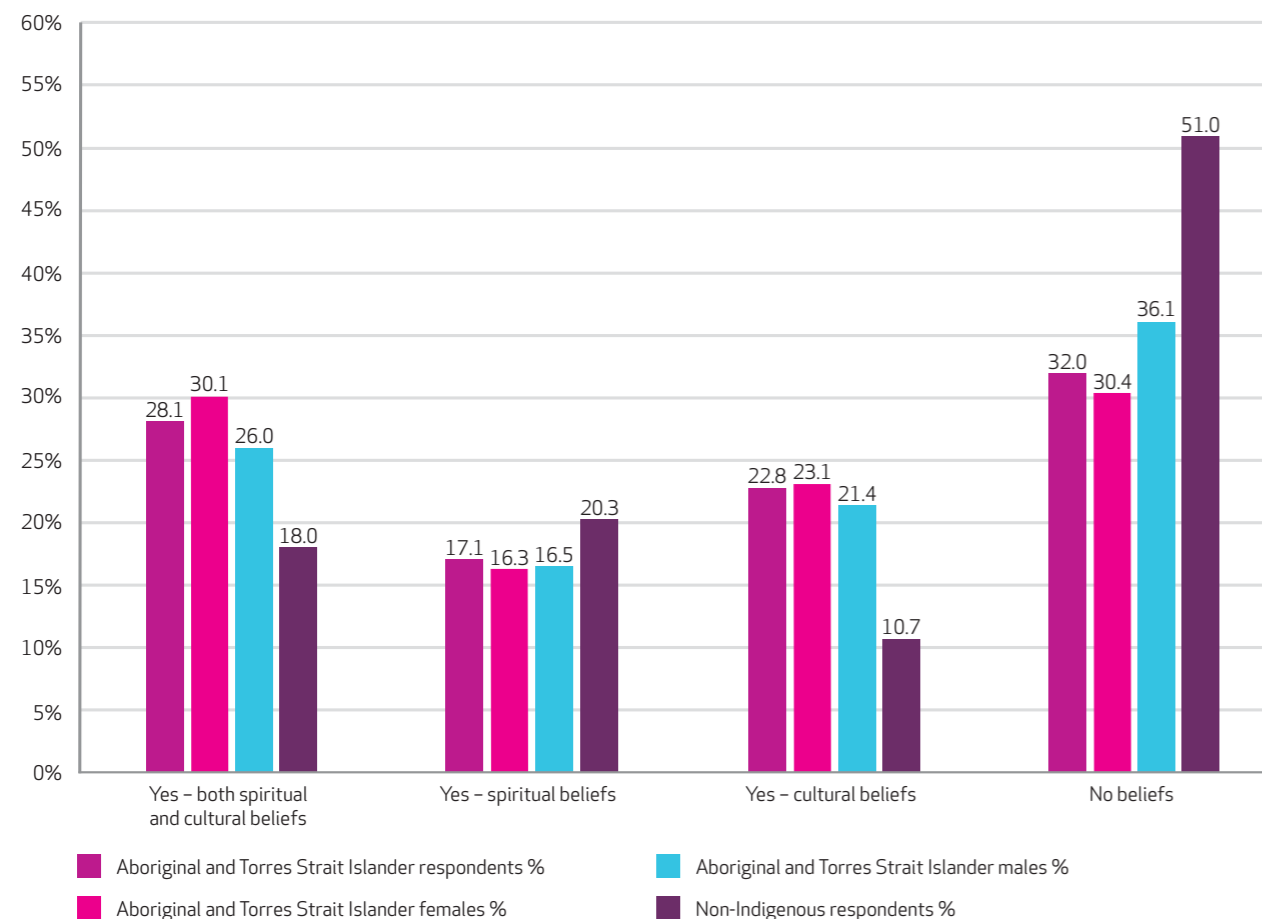
Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses. In 2023 this was asked as a multiple response question for the first time. In prior years it was asked as yes/no response per item which may impact historical comparisons.

Table 8.13: Activities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were involved in during the past year

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
Sports (as a participant)	58.7	54.3	65.9	67.6
Sports (as a spectator)	44.8	37.8	53.1	50.1
Volunteer work	34.1	39.7	29.6	41.3
Arts / cultural / music groups / activities	29.0	31.4	25.1	29.7
Youth groups / activities	26.2	23.2	27.4	17.9
Student leadership groups / activities	24.8	26.0	22.9	28.9
Religious groups / activities	17.4	11.4	19.0	15.3
Environmental groups / activities	10.7	7.3	10.3	7.3
Political groups / activities	8.4	3.8	8.9	3.1
None of the above	17.3	18.4	15.1	11.9

Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=797; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=315; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=358; Non-Indigenous n=17,778
 Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses. In 2023 this was asked as a multiple response question for the first time. In prior years it was asked as yes/no response per item which may impact historical comparisons.

Figure 8.10: Whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have cultural and/or spiritual beliefs



Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=776; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=312; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=346; Non-Indigenous n=17,564

Table 8.14: Activities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people find hard to do

	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Non-Indigenous respondents %
Fit in and socialise with everyone else (at school, work or socially)	32.9	41.6	23.2	28.4
Turn to friends and family if you need help	32.1	39.0	24.4	29.2
Do everyday activities as young people your age usually do	27.6	32.1	21.5	18.8
Turn to services / organisations if you need help	25.5	29.5	19.5	21.0
Do things in public places with friends (e.g. go to shopping centres)	24.4	26.0	18.4	15.6
Make choices and feel independent	24.4	32.7	15.0	21.5
Travel around the community (e.g. using footpaths)	17.3	18.4	14.4	8.7
None of the above	38.9	30.8	48.4	45.8

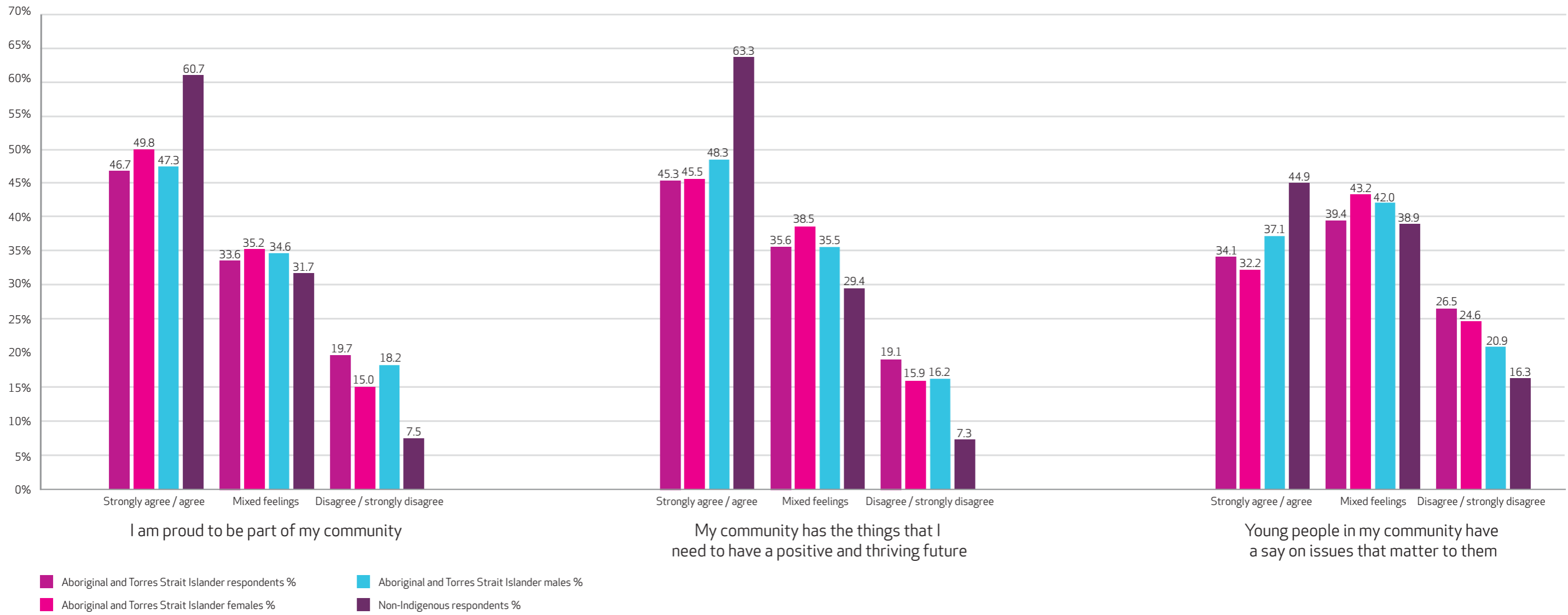
Base: All respondents. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=787; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=315; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=353; Non-Indigenous n=17,517
 Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses.



“The biggest challenge for me in the past year was making friends and talking to my classmates and others, I have one good friend, but she's in the lower grade now. But I really (don't) have anyone at school other than teachers and SSO.”

Female, 16, SA, Aboriginal

Figure 8.11: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and the feelings they have about their community



Base: All respondents. Sample sizes vary per row.

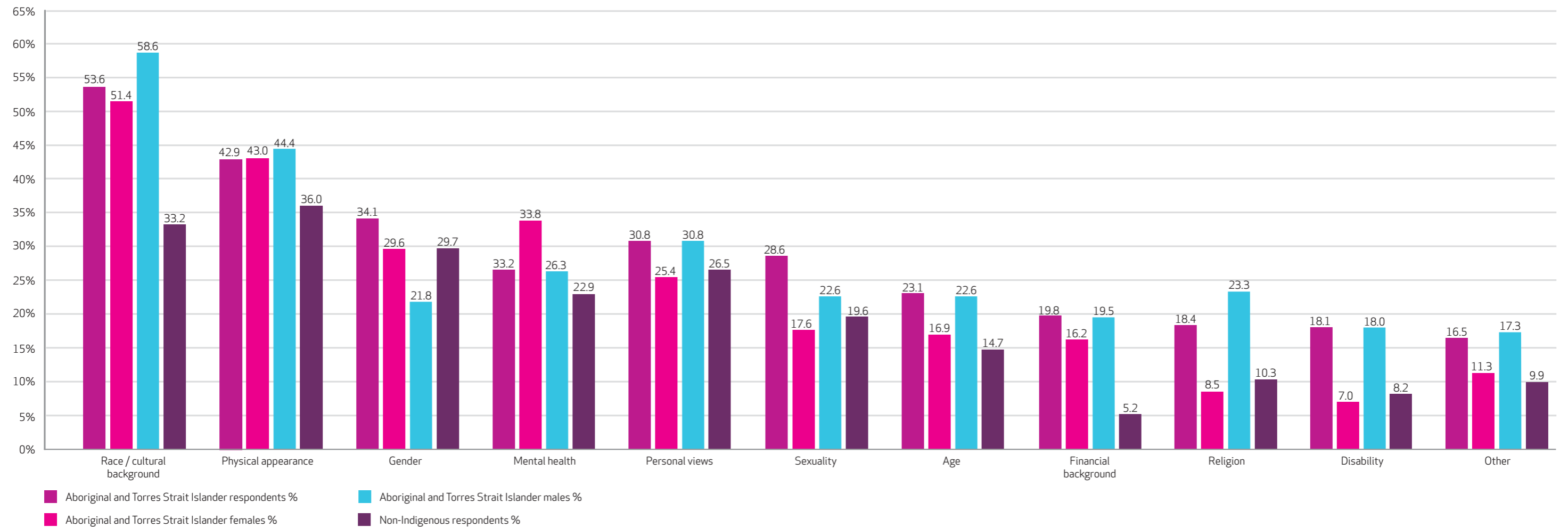


UNFAIR TREATMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

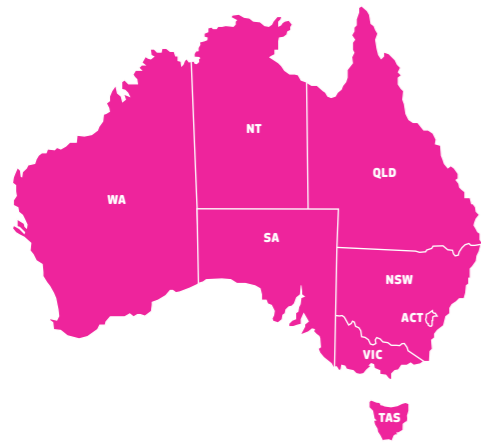
Over two in five (44.9%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported they had been unfairly treated or discriminated against in the last year. As shown in Figure 8.13, over half (53.6%) of these respondents said *race/cultural background* was the reason for their unfair treatment. The next most common reasons were *physical appearance* (42.9%) and *gender* (34.1%).



Figure 8.13: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people's reason for being treated unfairly



Base: Respondents who reported they had been treated unfairly or faced discrimination. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander n=364; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Females n=142; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Males n=133; Non-Indigenous n=4,618
 Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses.



State and Territory Overview

- ▶ Australian Capital Territory
- ▶ New South Wales
- ▶ Northern Territory
- ▶ Queensland
- ▶ South Australia
- ▶ Tasmania
- ▶ Victoria
- ▶ Western Australia





ACT

Full state sub-reports can be found [here](#)

862 ACT RESPONSES

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY FOR ACT RESPONDENTS

1

The environment

47% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 61% in 2022 and 43% in 2021.

25% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about climate change.

2

Equity and discrimination

34% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 39% in 2022 and 39% in 2021.

28% of young people were treated unfairly or discriminated against in the last year, most commonly due to: Physical appearance, Race/cultural background, Gender.

3

The economy and financial matters

34% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 26% in 2022 and 14% in 2021.

16% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about financial security.

The biggest challenge for me has been having financial issues within the family. We weren't able to pay bills, fuel, food, etc. So I picked up extra shifts whenever I could because of this. My pay was used for the above as well as my parents pay...

Female, 15, ACT



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In young peoples' own words

Young people told us in their own words and unprompted, what their **biggest personal challenge** has been in the past year, what they found helpful in dealing with that challenge and what more could be done to help them address their challenge. The key themes of young people's responses are shown below.

Over **4 in 10** young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what could help with their challenges, indicating there is an opportunity to improve awareness of supports available to them.

THE BIGGEST PERSONAL CHALLENGES

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP?

Solutions suggested by young people



45% SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties, general school challenges

58% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their studies

35% of students said there are barriers to achieving study or work goals

TOP 3 BARRIERS:

- 1 Mental health
- 2 Academic ability
- 3 Financial difficulty

- Study harder and more effectively
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Having more balanced and manageable workloads at school



24% MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Low mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem or self-harm

25% had high psychological distress

21% felt lonely all or most of the time

36% were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels



23% RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

Death, abuse, challenging relationships with family, friends or significant others

27% said their family's ability to get along was fair to poor

TOP SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
72% friends

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking those closest to me for advice and understanding
- Asking healthcare professionals for help



NSW

Full state sub-reports can be found [here](#)

4,584 NSW RESPONSES

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY FOR NSW RESPONDENTS

1

The environment

42% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 52% in 2022 and 37% in 2021.

21% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about climate change.

2

Mental health

37% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 36% in 2022 and 35% in 2021.

35% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about mental health.

3

Equity and discrimination

33% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 37% in 2022 and 33% in 2021.

29% of young people were treated unfairly or discriminated against in the last year, most commonly due to: Physical appearance, Race/cultural background, Gender.

...Issues like climate change and global inequities are not being addressed enough by governments and institutions as [sic] the impacts of such things will be placed on the younger generation...

Female, 17, NSW



Young people told us in their own words and unprompted, what their **biggest personal challenge** has been in the past year, what they found helpful in dealing with that challenge and what more could be done to help them address their challenge. The key themes of young people's responses are shown below.

Over **3 in 10** young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what could help with their challenges, indicating there is an opportunity to improve awareness of supports available to them.

THE BIGGEST PERSONAL CHALLENGES

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP?

Solutions suggested by young people



54% SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties, general school challenges

60% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their studies

40% of students said there are barriers to achieving study or work goals

TOP 3 BARRIERS:

- 1 Mental health
- 2 Academic ability
- 3 Financial difficulty

- Study harder and more effectively
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Being more organised and get help managing my time



28% MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Low mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem or self-harm

27% had high psychological distress

22% felt lonely all or most of the time

43% were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Better access to and availability of mental healthcare services



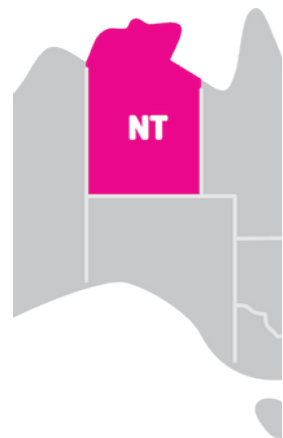
25% RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

Death, abuse, challenging relationships with family, friends or significant others

26% said their family's ability to get along was fair to poor

TOP SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
72% friends

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Asking those closest to me for advice and understanding



NT

Full state sub-reports can be found [here](#)

 **520** NT RESPONSES

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY FOR NT RESPONDENTS

1 

The environment

36% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 46% in 2022 and 33% in 2021.
22% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about climate change.

2 

Crime, safety and violence

33% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 15% in 2022 and 16% in 2021.
23% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about personal safety.

3 

The economy and financial matters

30% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 22% in 2022 and 12% in 2021.
19% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about financial security.

One of the biggest personal challenges I have encountered these past years is time management and financial stability.

Female, 17, NT



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In young peoples' own words

Young people told us in their own words and unprompted, what their **biggest personal challenge** has been in the past year, what they found helpful in dealing with that challenge and what more could be done to help them address their challenge. The key themes of young people's responses are shown below.

Over **3 in 10** young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what could help with their challenges, indicating there is an opportunity to improve awareness of supports available to them.

THE BIGGEST PERSONAL CHALLENGES

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP? Solutions suggested by young people



50% SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties, general school challenges

55% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their studies

53% of students said there are barriers to achieving study or work goals

TOP 3 BARRIERS:

- 1 Mental health
- 2 Financial difficulty
- 3 Academic ability

- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Study harder and more effectively
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Being more organised and get help managing my time



19% RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

Death, abuse, challenging relationships with family, friends or significant others

28% said their family's ability to get along was fair to poor

TOP SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
66% friends

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help



19% MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

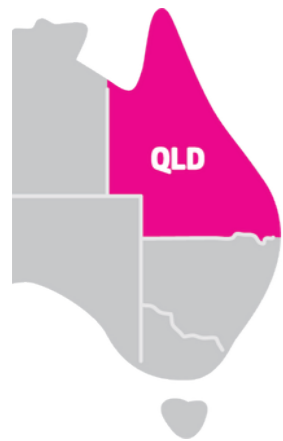
Low mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem or self-harm

32% had high psychological distress

24% felt lonely all or most of the time

42% were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress

- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Being properly diagnosed and given treatment
- Greater emphasis on mental health and wellbeing at school



QLD

Full state sub-reports can be found [here](#)

 **3,191** **QLD** **RESPONSES**

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY FOR QLD RESPONDENTS

1 

The environment

33% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 47% in 2022 and 33% in 2021.
14% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about climate change.

2 

The economy and financial matters

31% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 22% in 2022 and 12% in 2021.
13% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about financial security.

3 

Mental health

29% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 33% in 2022 and 35% in 2021.
26% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about mental health.

This past year mental health has been my biggest concern. I was struggling with friendships and relationships which ultimately impacted my education and took a toll on my mental health and effecting [sic] my physical health. I became extremely anxious/slightly depressed and started to lose weight. I wasn't myself.

Male, 15, QLD



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In young peoples' own words

Young people told us in their own words and unprompted, what their **biggest personal challenge** has been in the past year, what they found helpful in dealing with that challenge and what more could be done to help them address their challenge. The key themes of young people's responses are shown below.

Over 1 in 3 young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what could help with their challenges, indicating there is an opportunity to improve awareness of supports available to them.

THE BIGGEST PERSONAL CHALLENGES

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP?

Solutions suggested by young people



47% SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties, general school challenges

65% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their studies

34% of students said there are barriers to achieving study or work goals

TOP 3 BARRIERS:

- 1 Academic ability
- 2 Mental health
- 3 Financial difficulty

- Study harder and more effectively
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Being more organised and get help managing my time



21% MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Low mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem or self-harm

21% had high psychological distress

20% felt lonely all or most of the time

31% were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Better access to and availability of mental healthcare services



20% RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

Death, abuse, challenging relationships with family, friends or significant others

24% said their family's ability to get along was fair to poor

TOP SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
70% friends

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Asking those closest to me for advice and understanding



SA

Full state sub-reports can be found [here](#)

 **1,694 SA RESPONSES**

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY FOR SA RESPONDENTS

1 

The environment

44% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 50% in 2022 and 35% in 2021.

22% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about climate change.

2 

Equity and discrimination

33% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 32% in 2022 and 36% in 2021.

23% of young people were treated unfairly or discriminated against in the last year, most commonly due to:
Physical appearance, Race/cultural background, Personal views.

3 

The economy and financial matters

32% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 22% in 2022 and 9% in 2021.

16% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about financial security.

Financial freedom because money may not be the root to happiness but it is definitely the root for survival. And growing with a below average income family have [sic] made things tough with parents working all the time and not being able to drop to places [sic] and me having to catch the bus or walk...

Male, 16, SA



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In young peoples' own words

Young people told us in their own words and unprompted, what their **biggest personal challenge** has been in the past year, what they found helpful in dealing with that challenge and what more could be done to help them address their challenge. The key themes of young people's responses are shown below.

Over **1 in 3** young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what could help with their challenges, indicating there is an opportunity to improve awareness of supports available to them.

THE BIGGEST PERSONAL CHALLENGES

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP?

Solutions suggested by young people



46% SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties, general school challenges

67% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their studies

38% of students said there are barriers to achieving study or work goals

TOP 3 BARRIERS:

- 1 Mental health
- 2 Academic ability
- 3 Financial difficulty

- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Study harder and more effectively
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Being more organised and get help managing my time



25% MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Low mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem or self-harm

26% had high psychological distress

21% felt lonely all or most of the time

39% were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress

- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Being properly diagnosed and given treatment
- Better access to and availability of mental healthcare services



20% RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

Death, abuse, challenging relationships with family, friends or significant others

25% said their family's ability to get along was fair to poor

TOP SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
76% friends

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Asking those closest to me for advice and understanding



TAS

Full state sub-reports can be found [here](#)

 **826** TAS **RESPONSES**

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY FOR TAS RESPONDENTS

1 

The environment

51% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 51% in 2022 and 55% in 2021.

26% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about climate change.

2 

The economy and financial matters

31% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 23% in 2022 and 11% in 2021.

18% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about financial security.

3 

Housing and homelessness

29% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 22% in 2022 and 9% in 2021.

21% of young people who reported there were barriers to achieve their study or work goals said where they live was a barrier.

It would be nice to have less of an expectation to work while doing school, the pressure to do multiple things at once and the requirement to make money while trying to focus on my studies feels like it is making it harder than it should be.

Male, 17, TAS



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In young peoples' own words

Young people told us in their own words and unprompted, what their **biggest personal challenge** has been in the past year, what they found helpful in dealing with that challenge and what more could be done to help them address their challenge. The key themes of young people's responses are shown below.

Over **3 in 10** young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what could help with their challenges, indicating there is an opportunity to improve awareness of supports available to them.

THE BIGGEST PERSONAL CHALLENGES

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP?

Solutions suggested by young people



45% SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties, general school challenges

65% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their studies

44% of students said there are barriers to achieving study or work goals

TOP 3 BARRIERS:

- 1 Mental health
- 2 Financial difficulty
- 3 Academic ability

- Study harder and more effectively
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Being more organised and get help managing my time
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice



25% MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Low mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem or self-harm

23% had high psychological distress

23% felt lonely all or most of the time

37% were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Better access to and availability of mental healthcare services
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels



20% RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

Death, abuse, challenging relationships with family, friends or significant others

24% said their family's ability to get along was fair to poor

TOP SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
75% friends

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Having a more diverse support network
- Asking healthcare professionals for help



VIC

Full state sub-reports can be found [here](#)

 **6,175** **VIC** RESPONSES

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY FOR VIC RESPONDENTS

1 

The environment

51% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 54% in 2022 and 43% in 2021.

23% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about climate change.

2 

Equity and discrimination

33% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 36% in 2022 and 37% in 2021.

25% of young people were treated unfairly or discriminated against in the last year, most commonly due to:
Race/cultural background, Physical appearance, Gender.

3 

The economy and financial matters

31% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 22% in 2022 and 10% in 2021.
14% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about financial security.

Remaining positive. Whether it be about climate change, schoolwork, or just the future generally, it can be hard to remain optimistic sometimes.

Male, 16, VIC



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In young peoples' own words

Young people told us in their own words and unprompted, what their **biggest personal challenge** has been in the past year, what they found helpful in dealing with that challenge and what more could be done to help them address their challenge. The key themes of young people's responses are shown below.

Close to 1 in 3 young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what could help with their challenges, indicating there is an opportunity to improve awareness of supports available to them.

THE BIGGEST PERSONAL CHALLENGES

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP?

Solutions suggested by young people



47% SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties, general school challenges

65% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their studies

34% of students said there are barriers to achieving study or work goals

TOP 3 BARRIERS:

- 1 Mental health
- 2 Academic ability
- 3 Financial difficulty

- Study harder and more effectively
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice



24% MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Low mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem or self-harm

24% had high psychological distress

19% felt lonely all or most of the time

39% were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress

- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Better access to and availability of mental healthcare services



20% RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

Death, abuse, challenging relationships with family, friends or significant others

22% said their family's ability to get along was fair to poor

TOP SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
76% friends

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Asking those closest to me for advice and understanding



WA

Full state sub-reports can be found [here](#)

 **1,649** **WA** RESPONSES

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY FOR WA RESPONDENTS

1 

The environment

44% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 58% in 2022 and 35% in 2021.

20% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about climate change.

2 

Equity and discrimination

39% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 38% in 2022 and 36% in 2021.

32% of young people were treated unfairly or discriminated against in the last year, most commonly due to:
Physical appearance, Race/cultural background, Gender.

3 

Mental health

29% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 33% in 2022 and 32% in 2021.

32% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about mental health.

I had a friend who was struggling with his mental health. It was hard because he found it incredibly difficult to speak about his own problems and there was no real outlet for him to get his feelings heard. He didn't have any adult figure that he could confide in and he certainly didn't want his parents to know about his problems.

Male, 16, WA



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In young peoples' own words

Young people told us in their own words and unprompted, what their **biggest personal challenge** has been in the past year, what they found helpful in dealing with that challenge and what more could be done to help them address their challenge. The key themes of young people's responses are shown below.

3 in 10 young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what could help with their challenges, indicating there is an opportunity to improve awareness of supports available to them.

THE BIGGEST PERSONAL CHALLENGES

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP? Solutions suggested by young people



52% SCHOOL CHALLENGES
Academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers, learning difficulties, general school challenges

60% of students were satisfied or very satisfied with their studies
40% of students said there are barriers to achieving study or work goals
TOP 3 BARRIERS:
1 Mental health
2 Academic ability
3 Financial difficulty

- Study harder and more effectively
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Having more balanced and manageable workloads at school



24% MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES
Low mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem or self-harm

28% had high psychological distress
24% felt lonely all or most of the time
37% were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress

- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Greater understanding from teachers and parents about stress levels
- Being properly diagnosed and given treatment



20% RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES
Death, abuse, challenging relationships with family, friends or significant others

30% said their family's ability to get along was fair to poor
TOP SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
69% friends

- Being comfortable asking for support or advice
- Asking healthcare professionals for help
- Asking those closest to me for advice and understanding

About the survey

Background

The Mission Australia *Youth Survey* is the largest, national annual survey of young people aged 15-19 in Australia. Now in its 22nd year, the *Youth Survey* aims to identify the values, aspirations and issues of concern to young people. The *Youth Survey* was developed by Mission Australia to strengthen our capacity to support and advocate for young people in need.

Participation

In 2023, 19,501 young people across Australia completed the *Youth Survey*.

Focus areas

The 2023 *Youth Survey* sought to capture the experiences and perspectives of young people on a broad range of issues as well as collecting valuable socio-demographic data. Topics covered include education and employment, barriers to achieving study and work goals, personal challenges and possible solutions, national concerns, sources of support, discrimination and unfair treatment, general wellbeing, community connection, housing and homelessness, finances and climate.

Research Ethics

The 2023 *Youth Survey* obtained Human Research Ethics Committee approval from the University of Melbourne (Ref: 2023-22721-37099-6).

Methodology

Data Collection

The 2023 *Youth Survey* was open to young people across Australia aged 15 to 19 years. The data collection period was between 30 March and 25 August 2023. Survey participation by young people was voluntary and no survey incentives were offered to survey respondents. The survey could be completed online or by paper. Respondents were able to skip survey questions, except for state and date of birth, and could exit the survey at any point.

Young people were engaged via schools, local governments, community and service organisations and through Mission Australia services. The survey was also available on the Mission Australia website and promoted via social media. Following research approval from State and Territory Education Departments and Catholic Education Offices, secondary school principals were approached via email with information about the survey and how to get involved. Information about the *Youth Survey* was also distributed to peak bodies, local governments, community managed organisations and Mission Australia

services. A link to the online survey was provided to participating schools, organisations and local councils who then distributed the link to young people.

As in previous years, participating schools, organisations and local councils were able to receive a tailored *Youth Survey* report if 100 or more (or mutually agreed lower number) young people responded to the survey. In order to do this, a pre-arranged code was allocated to the school or organisation, which young people entered into the survey prior to completion.

Approval for public schools in Western Australia (WA) to participate in the survey was provided on 3 August, just prior to the initial survey close date of 11 August. To provide an opportunity for these schools to participate, the data collection period was extended for two weeks. However, the short-notice and quick turnaround impacted the capacity of many WA public schools to take part in the 2023 *Youth Survey*.

Child & Youth Safe Procedure

Mission Australia is committed to child and youth safety and extends this responsibility to the young people who participate in the *Youth Survey*. In line with the research approvals obtained from State and Territory Education Departments and Catholic Education Offices, Mission Australia reported re-identifiable information to participating schools if a young person's responses to the Kessler 6 (K6) questions indicated psychological distress, responses to the Personal Wellbeing Index-School Children (PWI-SC) indicated low wellbeing and/or if any free-text response indicated the young person was at potential risk of harm, abuse or neglect. However, in the case of WA public schools, re-identifiable information was only mandated and available to participating schools if any free-text response indicated the young person was at a potential risk of harm, abuse or neglect. To implement this reporting mechanism, date of birth is a mandatory item in the survey. For any survey respondents whose responses indicated potential risk of harm, psychological distress or low wellbeing, the date of birth, gender and postcode (where provided) were reported back to school principals on a weekly basis. In the case of WA public schools, additional demographic data was mandated and included in any reports to school principals. Where possible, principals were encouraged to re-identify the young person and provide appropriate support or services.

Analysis

Only completed surveys were used in analysis. An online survey was considered complete if the respondent finishes and submits the survey (regardless of how many questions they responded to). A paper survey is considered completed if the majority of questions are answered.

Quantitative analysis was conducted using *SPSS version 29*. Statisticians from the University of Melbourne were consulted to produce logistic regression models to identify and assess statistically significant differences between cohorts. A p-value equal or lower than 0.05 was interpreted as statistically significant. Only comparisons between cohorts that are statistically significant are featured in the report commentary. Thematic analysis of open-ended responses was conducted using *NVivo version 13*.

Survey design and changes in 2023

Mission Australia reviews the survey design each year. As a result, a number of new questions and amendments were made to the survey for 2023:

New questions:

- For young people in paid employment, a five-point scale question was added to capture satisfaction with their job.
- A cluster of questions was added to better understand young people's housing and financial situations. These questions will be explored in subsequent reports scheduled for release in 2024.
- A cluster of questions was added to better understand the impact of extreme weather and how climate change impact the attitudes, feelings and behaviours of young people. These questions will be explored in subsequent reports scheduled for release in 2024.

Amendments:

- For the question which asked what students are planning to do after leaving school, the following option was added: *Become a professional athlete*.
- The question which asked students about barriers to achieving their work or study goals had the following option added: *Caring responsibilities and Other (please specify)*.
- The *Yes* response to the question about engagement in paid work was split into two options: *Yes, I'm a permanent employee* and *Yes, I'm a casual*.
- The questions about involvement in groups/activities and sources of support were changed from a *yes/no* response to each item to *select all that apply*, with the addition of a *none of the above* option.
- The question about reasons for unfair treatment or discrimination had the following options added: *personal views* and *physical appearance*.

This report

This report contains an executive summary, a national summary, a summary of findings for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and a snapshot of key findings for each State and Territory. More detailed individual summaries for each State and Territory have been produced and can be found [Youth survey | Mission Australia](#)

The national summary includes national data alongside breakdowns by gender, and where appropriate, compares 2023 data with previous years. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander chapter compares the responses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with responses from non-Indigenous people, and has breakdowns by female and males for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Gender diverse data has not been displayed due to sample size.

While asked of all young people in 2022 and 2023, the Personal Wellbeing Index is not included in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander chapter due to concerns about its cultural appropriateness and safety. The inclusion of the Personal Wellbeing Index in the questionnaire for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people will be reviewed for 2024.

Introduced in 2021 and continued in 2022 and 2023, responses from young people who identified as genders other than female and male are included in the national summary. In the survey, gender options included are *male*, *female*, *a-gender/non-gendered*, *non-binary gender*, *transgender*, *not listed* and *prefer not to say*. Due to the small sample sizes, *a-gender/non-gendered*, *non-binary gender*, *transgender* and *not listed*, are combined under the *gender diverse* reporting category.

Please note that the percentages in all tables, figures and text throughout the body of the report are rounded to one decimal place and may not necessarily total 100%. Not all respondents answered all survey questions; the data presented for each question are for those who responded to that question.

Young people – each with their own background, experiences, culture and values – are behind the numbers, words and figures in this report. We recognise that the measures in this report reflect only part and not the whole story of these young people's lives.

Acknowledgements

Mission Australia would like to acknowledge the ongoing support of the State and Territory Departments of Education and the Catholic Schools Offices from across the country. This valuable research would not be possible without their support.

Mission Australia would also like to thank the very many educational institutions, youth and community organisations, government agencies, corporates, philanthropic organisations and others who helped to engage young people in the *Youth Survey 2023* and raise awareness by promoting through their networks and on social media.

These include:

- Albany Youth Support Association
- Alpine Shire Council
- Burnie Works
- City of Ballarat
- City of Boroondara
- City of Canterbury Bankstown
- City of Frankston
- City of Greater Bendigo
- City of Rockingham
- City of Salisbury
- Greater Shepparton Lighthouse Project
- Hepburn Shire Council
- Hillsong Australia Youth
- Ignite Youth
- International Coalition of Girls' Schools
- MADALAH Limited
- Mornington Peninsular Shire Council
- Orygen
- Scouts Victoria
- Southern Fleurieu Youth Network
- Street Peace
- Workskil Australia
- Youth Off The Streets



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Who is Mission Australia?

Mission Australia is a national Christian charity motivated by a shared vision of an Australia where everyone has a safe home and can thrive.

Since 1859, we've been standing alongside people and communities in need across Australia, offering real hope that has lasting impact. Backed by our supporters, churches, partners and funders, we work together for the long-term wellbeing of anyone who needs us by collaborating with them to tackle the root causes of their challenges.

Every day we deliver homelessness crisis and prevention services, provide social and affordable housing, assist struggling families and children, address mental health issues, fight substance dependencies, support people with disability and much more.

We measure our impact, collecting evidence of what works to inform our service design and delivery, and to advocate for change.

Mission Australia believes a person's circumstances shouldn't define their future and that given the right support, everyone can reach their full potential.

That's why we stand together with Australians in need, for as long as they need us.

Thank you

This publication would not have been possible without the 19,501 young people who completed Mission Australia's Youth Survey 2023. We extend special thanks to them, the staff of Mission Australia, and the many schools and organisations who supported their involvement.

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If you are a young person and need someone to talk with, you can contact Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 (24/7) kidshelpline.com.au

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