

**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**



**YOUTH SURVEY 2022
SUMMARY BOOKLET**

2022 Youth Survey Overview

The *Mission Australia Youth Survey* has been capturing the aspirations, experiences and concerns of young people annually for the last 21 years. As the largest survey of its kind in Australia, it provides an opportunity for young people to share what matters to them and give their perspectives on a range of issues. In 2022, the Youth Survey was completed by 18,800 young people aged 15 to 19 across the country.

The *Youth Survey 2022* revealed many things to celebrate but also revealed the wide range of challenges and concerns young people have experienced. Most young people were actively engaged in study and/or work, have support networks to turn to and are proud to be part of their community. However, poor mental health and low wellbeing continue to be a concern and many young people experienced financial and housing instability.

We asked young people a series of open questions that provided them with an opportunity to say in their own words *what their greatest personal challenges were in the last year, what has helped them address these challenges and what more could be done to help them address their personal challenges*. The responses to these questions are a valuable source for understanding the issues and solutions that are top of mind for young people.

From their own words, the top personal challenges experienced by young people in the past year centre on the themes of school, mental health, relationships and COVID-19. Four in 10 (41.5%) noted challenges relating to school which included academic pressure, high workload, challenges with teachers or learning difficulties. These challenges exist in the context of years of COVID-19 disruption, with almost three quarters (73.2%) of young people saying the pandemic has negatively impacted their education, up from 62.3% in 2021.

Close to three in 10 (27.7%) of young people spoke about mental health challenges which included stress, anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. These mental health concerns were also reflected in responses to other questions around happiness, loneliness and general wellbeing. In these self-assessments, males scored higher than females across most wellbeing questions. Gender diverse young people had the lowest self-assessments of their wellbeing.

When young people reflected on what helped them address their personal challenge, they identified that the things that worked for them were their personal networks of family and friends, taking time to relax, having support available at school and accessing professional support. Many of their ideas about what more could be done focused on better supports available at their school and being more open with their friends and family.

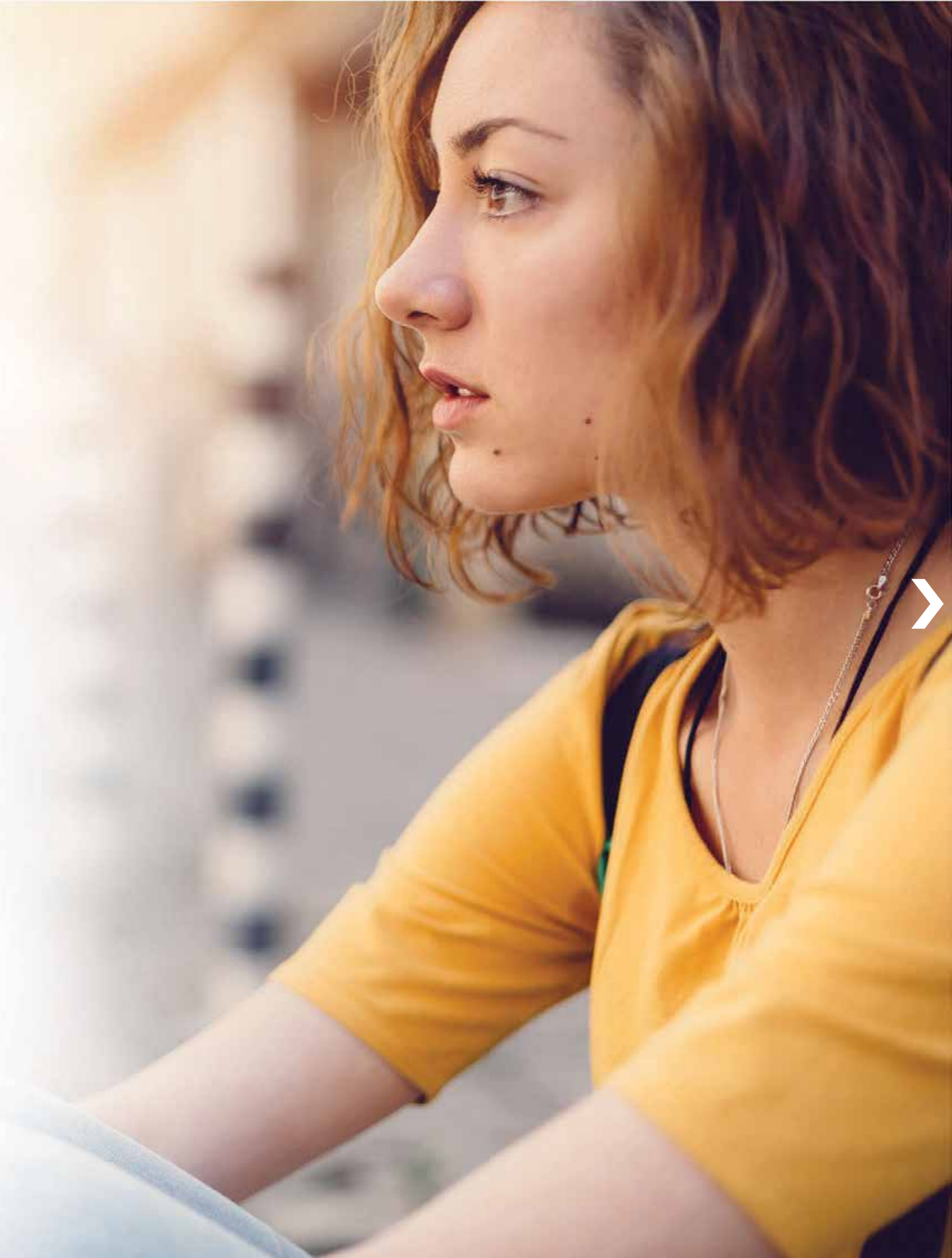
Some young people said nothing more could help, or they were unsure what more could help with their challenges. Also, many did not seek mental health support even though they felt that they needed it. These two findings point to an opportunity to improve awareness of the support available to young people and reduce the barriers to them accessing it, such as stigma, shame and the fear that confidentiality will not be respected.

As in prior years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported deeper challenges than their non-Indigenous peers. The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were engaged in education and felt they could turn to their family or friends for help with important issues and have spiritual and/or cultural beliefs. However, they were also more likely to have spent time away from home because they felt they couldn't go back, experienced financial concerns and faced discrimination. They were also more likely to believe that their community does not have the things that they need to have a positive and thriving future.

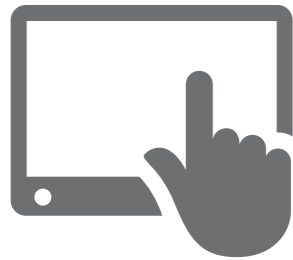
Beyond their own personal concerns, young people continue to demonstrate awareness and engagement with broader societal issues. When considering the most important issues in Australia today, half (51.0%) nominated the environment, and over a third noted equity and discrimination (35.9%) and mental health (33.9%).

These *Youth Survey* findings shed light on the experiences and concerns of young people that often go unheard. The voices of young people are important in the development of policies and programs that affect them. Young people are the future generation, and their current and future concerns should be taken seriously.

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DEMOGRAPHICS, EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING



18,800
RESPONSES



Employment



53.3%

Employed
Almost all employed part-time

25.9%

Not employed but
looking for work

94.0%

At least one parent or guardian/s was employed
(as of last week)



Housing and financial situation



86.8%

living in **privately owned or rented house/flat**

4.6%

living in **public/social housing**

In the last year:

10.4% **Worried about having a safe place to stay**

8.4% **Spent time away from home** because they felt they couldn't go back

2.1% Had **no fixed address** or lived in a refuge or transitional accommodation

6.4% Said they or their **family sought financial help** from family, friends or charity

5.9% Said they or their **family could not pay bills or car expenses**

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES IN AUSTRALIA TODAY

1 

The environment

51.0% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 38.0% in 2021 and 29.8% in 2020.

25.5% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about climate change.

If the government/s (Australian but also internationally) and corporations took stronger action against climate change, I think I'd be less worried.

Female, 15, NSW

2 

Equity and discrimination

35.9% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 35.4% in 2021 and 40.2% in 2020. 27.1% of young people were treated unfairly or discriminated against in the last year, most commonly due to: **Gender | Race/cultural background | Mental health**

The biggest challenge I have faced is racism and discrimination, as well as struggling with the perception of self and confidence. These have been problems all of my life and they have not changed at all. I don't feel they will ever change.

Male, 16, QLD

3 

Mental health

33.9% identified it as one of the most important issues in Australia compared with 34.6% in 2021 and 30.6% in 2020.

38.5% of young people were personally extremely or very concerned about mental health.

I've struggled a lot with my mental health in the past year. Going to school, let alone getting out of bed was very difficult for me and I had a lot of trouble asking for help.

Female, 15, VIC



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

In young people's 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.

THE BIGGEST PERSONAL CHALLENGES

Close to 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

41.5%



SCHOOL CHALLENGES

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

27.7%



MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

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

19.7%



RELATIONSHIP CHALLENGES

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

14.7%



COVID-19 CHALLENGES

Lockdowns, home schooling, getting COVID

WHAT MORE WOULD HELP?



SOLUTIONS SUGGESTED BY YOUNG PEOPLE



Having more and/or different supports available inside schools



Asking for help from healthcare professionals like psychologists, counsellors and doctors

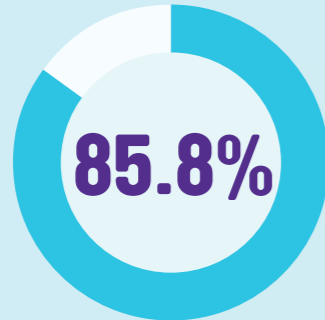
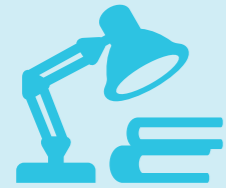


Asking family and friends for additional support



Supports and systems to manage future pandemics and cope with the effects

SCHOOL



studying full-time

62.6% of students were **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with their studies

41.8% of students said there are **barriers to achieving study or work goals**

3 TOP BARRIERS:



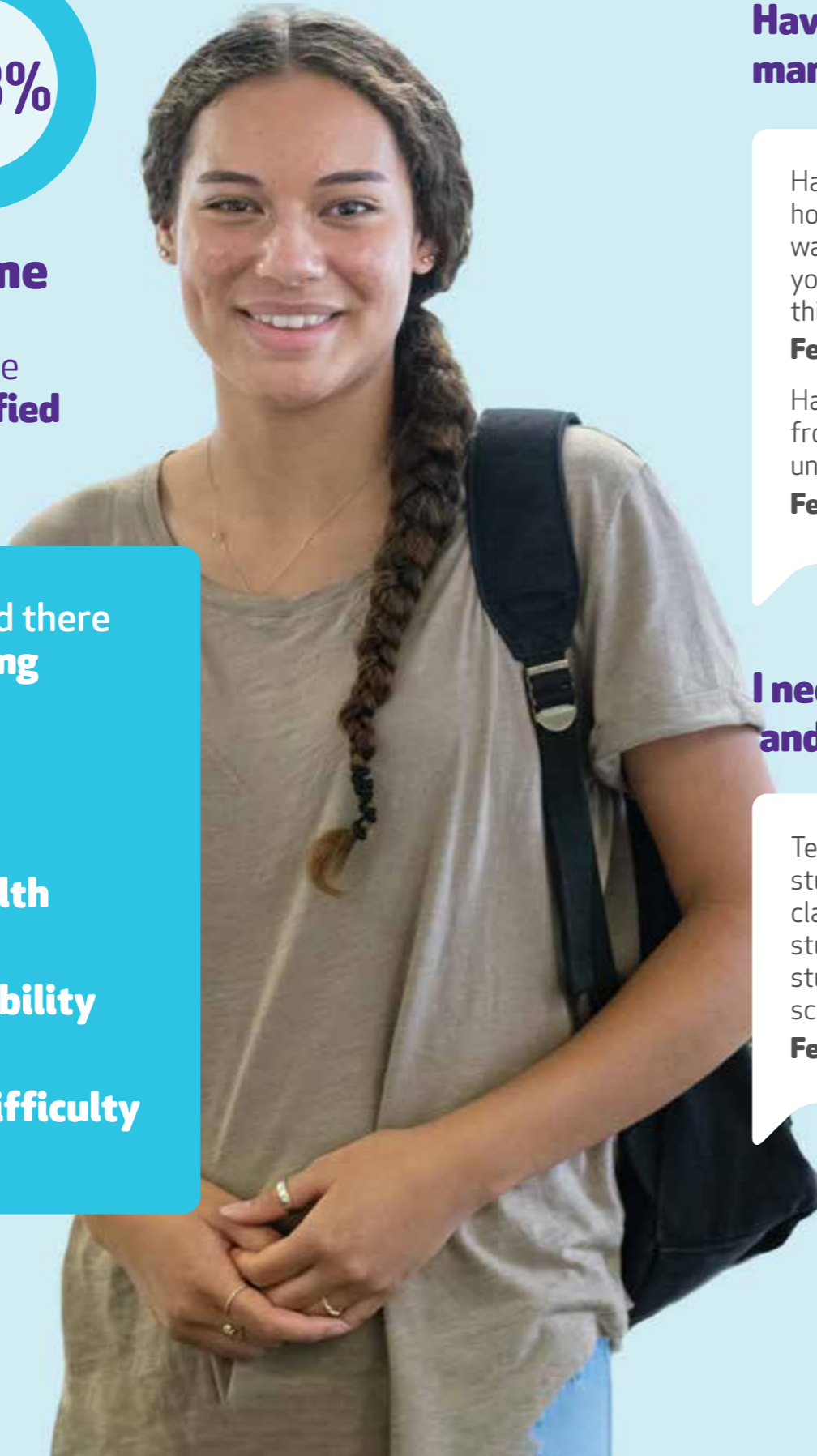
Mental health



Academic ability



Financial difficulty



What more would help young people address school related challenges?

Having more balanced and manageable workloads at school

Having more information about how to deal with school in a balanced way and how to study effectively so you still have time to yourself to do things that make you happy.

Female, 18, VIC

Having more support coming from teachers in the sense of understanding workloads.

Female, 16, VIC

Helping my parents understand my deadlines and stress at school

Inform parents about the stress around grades, teachers always say that marks don't matter but they do to our parents.

Female, 17, VIC

More understanding from teachers about stress levels

Less stress enforced by teachers when it comes to assessments and tests.

Non-binary, 15, QLD

I need help getting organised and managing my time

Teachers helping students to create a study timetable or implement study in class so we don't spend so much time studying at home when we could do study/homework during the school day.

Female, 16, NSW

I need to study more

Study more and harder.

Male, 17, NSW

MENTAL HEALTH



28.8% had **high psychological distress***

23.5% felt **lonely** all or most of the time

44.0% were extremely or very concerned about **coping with stress**



49.9%
2022

Felt **positive** or **very positive** about the future. Down from previous years.

51.6% 2021 & **55.5%** 2020



Gender differences

Across most wellbeing questions, males had the highest self-reported wellbeing, followed by females, with gender diverse young people having the lowest.



MALES
42.1%



FEMALES
22.8%

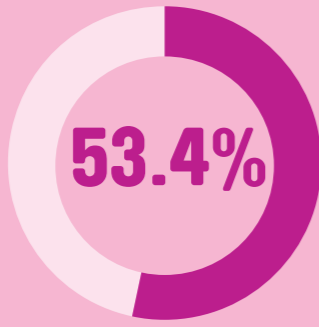


GENDER DIVERSE
12.5%

Mental health and wellbeing rated **excellent** or **very good**

*A score between 13 to 24 on the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6)

MENTAL HEALTH



53.4% have needed support with mental health in their lives

58.1%

Sought mental health support

41.9%

Did not seek mental health support

Top sources of mental health support:

Health professionals (e.g. doctor)
Family | Friends

Top barriers to accessing professional mental health support:

1. Feeling stigma or shame
2. Concerns about confidentiality
3. Don't know where to go for help



What more would help young people address mental health challenges?

Talking to my family or friends about how I'm feeling

I could talk to my parents about it but I am afraid of how they will react.
Female, 15, VIC

Asking healthcare professionals for help

I have never been to therapy so I think if I have the courage to go, that would maybe help.
Gender not specified, 16, QLD

Learning strategies to reduce stress

Manage my time better but also learn that it's ok to take a break and not be studying all the time...Learn some coping techniques and strategies.
Female, 16, NT

Having more emphasis on mental health and wellbeing in school

Having more discussions around mental health maybe more of a focus on it at schools. More teenagers go through mental health issues than you think and no one discusses it everyone hides their issues.
Female, 16, QLD

Feeling more comfortable talking to school counsellors/teachers about my issues

More support and pathways for help. Confidentiality so parents and carers don't find out. More understanding of how students are feeling.
Gender not specified, 15, VIC

RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNITY



Family's ability to get along:

49.4%

said **excellent** or **very good**

26.1%

said **fair** or **poor**



Community:

53.4% agree or strongly agree that **I am proud to be part of my community**

51.2% agree or strongly agree that **my community has the things I need to have a positive and thriving future**



Top sources of support for young people:

Friends | Parent/s or guardians
Relative/family friend | Brother/sister

However, **31.2%** find it hard to **turn to friends and family if I need help**

What more would help young people address relationship challenges?

Talking through my concerns with family and friends

Try and work things out with my family and friends by having a long conversation with them about how I feel.

Female, 15, QLD

Creating deeper relationships

Give more emphasis on creating meaningful relationships in youth through sport, church, school, art, work etc.

Female, 17, NSW

Being comfortable asking for support

I think being confident enough to reach out to people about how I was feeling instead of keeping it to myself which would cause me to lose control of my emotions.

Female, 16, NSW

Having a more diverse support network

More external support such as groups outside of school.

Gender diverse, 16, QLD

More understanding from family

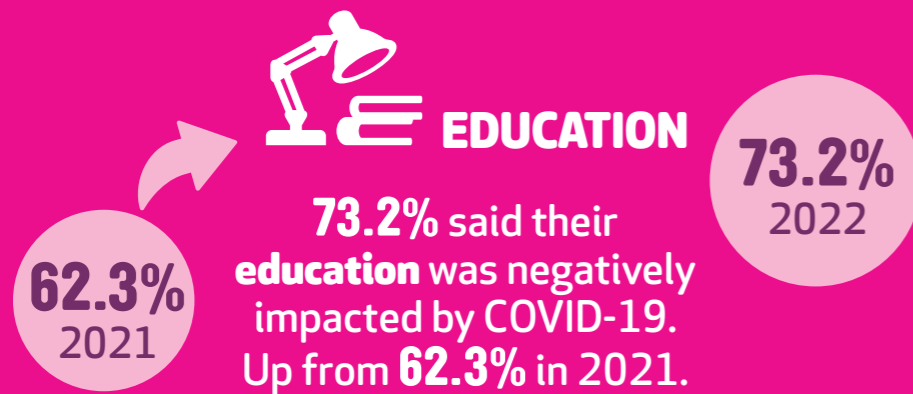
Family understanding my work pressure.

Female, 16, QLD



COVID-19

TOP 3 AREAS NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY COVID-19



What more would help young people address COVID-19 challenges?

Additional help to recover from the impacts of lockdowns and remote learning

More support and recognition towards those who went through lockdown during their early high schooling years. There hasn't been much mental health support towards those who struggled through the lockdown.

Male, 15, VIC

Mental health impacts to be considered for future pandemic restrictions

More reasonable COVID restrictions for young people who are suffering with significant mental health concerns.

Female, 17, NSW

Putting in ways and learning new actions to prepare for future lockdowns that might come about to ensure that teens and children are allowed to have some freedom and be able to socialise.

Female, 16, NSW

Better online school system if we ever go into any future lockdowns

Honestly, I believe that the root of the problem was the COVID lockdowns which is a one off and will probably not happen to that extent again. I guess the biggest things for me would be to have less demanding online school with modified programs as it should be unreasonable to complete school fully online. However, there were some benefits to online school if done differently which would be useful if not done every day long term.

Male, 17, NSW

Help me transition back to face-to-face learning

More help and resources for people still struggling after COVID with things like coming to school.

Female, 16, VIC

No more lockdowns

Don't go back into lockdown.

Female, 15, VIC



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 18,800 young people who completed Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2022*. 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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