

**MISSION  
AUSTRALIA**

**youth survey  
report 2018**



## Contents

CEO's message	2
Executive summary	3
Mission Australia Youth Survey	5
About the survey	6
Policy context	8
National summary	16
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander summary	32
Australian Capital Territory	50
New South Wales	67
Northern Territory	84
Queensland	101
South Australia	118
Tasmania	135
Victoria	152
Western Australia	169
Acknowledgements	186

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.

ISBN: 978-0-6481835-6-3  
© Mission Australia 2018

This report may be cited as: Carlisle, E., Fildes, J., Hall, S., Hicking, V., Perrens, B. and Plummer, J. 2018, Youth Survey Report 2018, Mission Australia.

# CEO's message

A sincere thanks to the 28,000 young people who took the time to complete this year's *Youth Survey*. We are delighted that every year, the number of respondents grows, and we are grateful also to the schools, parents and our sector colleagues who supported young people to complete the survey.

The *Youth Survey* provides rich insights into young people's hopes, aspirations and concerns and is widely used as an authoritative source of information across governments, NGOs and social commentators to inform the debate around the circumstances of young people in Australia. It is therefore pleasing to see so many young people reporting a positive and optimistic outlook on their lives and their futures. Many showed confidence in achieving their study and work goals, were positive about family relationships and showed strong engagement with their communities through a range of activities.

Yet, the results also shine a light onto the challenges faced by young people. In particular, young people expressed concern about finding work and moving out of home. Nearly four in ten young people surveyed identified that they felt there were barriers to them finding work; with housing costs, financial stability and availability of housing reported as the top three barriers to moving out home.

We have also seen mental health concerns increasingly being raised by Australia's young people. Mental health is the number one issue of national concern in this year's *Youth Survey*. Over the past three years, we have seen the proportion of young people identifying mental health as an issue of national importance double, rising from 21% in 2016 to 43% in 2018.

In addition, the top four issues of personal concern also have strong links to mental health: coping with stress, school or study problems, mental health and body image.

While the increased identification of mental health as a personal and national concern is worrying – it is important to consider these findings in the broader context. We must acknowledge the positive effort both nationally and internationally that has raised public awareness and, in part, reduced the stigma of mental health issues. We should acknowledge the effectiveness of these efforts in the increased identification of mental health as a personal and national concern in the *Youth Survey*.

Yet, we do need to ensure that self-awareness is matched with adequate access to the right help when needed. Whatever a young person's background or circumstances, we know that access to appropriate and timely support can make a real difference in their lives.

Unfortunately, we also know that help is not always there when needed. The service system is difficult to navigate. At best the support offered is patchy, especially outside of metro areas, and often not tailored to the needs of young people and their help-seeking preferences. This has to be tackled as a priority.

Moreover, we want to see investment in programs that promote mental health and wellbeing in the early years and holistic supports for young people that meet a range of needs during adolescence, including assistance with school or study problems.

Pleasingly, the current generation of young people seem to be very aware of mental health issues and are asking for change. It is our duty to support them as they transition from adolescence to adulthood and to provide them with the services they need to do so.

While the survey shows us some areas of concern, it also reveals that the majority of young are engaged, motivated and have aspirations for their futures. They tell us that generally they are confident, have positive relationships and participate in a wide range of activities.

These are our future leaders and I am confident that if we provide them with the right supports now then we have a very positive future.

**James Toomey**  
CEO, Mission Australia



# Executive summary

## Demographic profile of respondents

A total of 28,286 young people between the ages of 15 and 19 responded to Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2018*. The largest number of responses came from New South Wales (29.0%), Queensland (20.4%) and Victoria (18.1%). Over half of the respondents (55.0%) were female, and just over one in seven (15.0%) respondents were born overseas. Nearly one in five (19.4%) young people spoke a language other than English at home. The level of reported disability in 2018 was 6.0%; slightly higher than in 2017 (4.8%). The vast majority of respondents were studying full-time (94.0%), which is consistent with the result of 94.9% in 2017. Around four in ten (42.1%) respondents were working part-time and over one third (34.7%) indicated that they were looking for work, which is again consistent with previous years.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

1,594 (5.8%) respondents to Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2018* identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Of this total, 1,277 (4.6%) respondents identified as Aboriginal, while 173 (0.6%) identified as Torres Strait Islander (the remaining 0.5% identified as both). Just under half (48.5%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were male and 45.7% were female, while 16.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they had a disability. In total, 3.8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported speaking an Indigenous language at home.

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported that they were studying full-time (83.3%), intended to complete year 12 (90.0%), and indicated that they were either *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with their studies (56.8%). Around four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported plans to *go to university* (42.6%) or to *get a job* (39.2%) after finishing school. A further breakdown of results can be found in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander summary.

## Young people and plans for study and training

Young people were asked about their future plans for education and training following school. Of those who were still at school, 96.3% stated that they intended to complete Year 12. Over twice the proportion of males than females indicated that they did not intend to complete Year 12 (5.5% compared with 2.1% respectively).

When asked what they were planning to do after school, *going to university* was the most frequent option chosen by young people (66.7%). Many respondents planned to *get a job* (34.4%) and to *travel or go on a gap year* (28.8%) after school, while 13.9% planned to *go to TAFE or college* and 8.9% planned to *get an apprenticeship*. While a greater proportion of females than males indicated that they planned to *go to university* after

school (72.9% compared with 59.2%), over four times the proportion of males indicated that they were intending to *get an apprenticeship* (15.6% compared with 3.7% of females).

## Confidence in achieving study/work goals after school

Respondents were asked how confident they were in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school. Almost half of respondents indicated high levels of confidence in their ability to achieve their study/work goals, with 10.8% indicating that they were *extremely confident* and 38.2% indicating that they were *very confident*. However, close to one in ten young people were less confident in their ability to achieve their goals: 7.2% reported feeling *slightly confident* and 2.6% were *not at all confident* in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school. A higher proportion of male than female respondents reported feeling *extremely confident* or *very confident* (13.5% and 41.7% compared with 8.3% and 36.0%).

## Barriers to finding work

For the first time in 2018, young people were asked whether they felt there are any barriers which may be impacting upon them finding work. Nearly four in ten (38.8%) respondents indicated that they felt there are barriers to finding work, with a greater proportion of females (42.8%) than males (32.9%) reporting the presence of barriers.

Respondents who indicated the presence of barriers were then asked to indicate from a number of items the barrier/s that were preventing them from finding work. Nationally, the top three barriers young people considered to be impacting upon them finding work were *school responsibilities*, *lack of skills/experience* and *lack of jobs* (20.0%, 14.5% and 12.2% respectively). Around one in ten respondents indicated that they saw *transport* and *job requirements* as barriers to them finding work (11.7% and 9.6% respectively). A greater proportion of females than males indicated almost all of the items were barriers to them finding work.

## Barriers to moving out of home

For the first time in 2018, young people were asked whether they felt there were any barriers which may impact upon them moving out of home in the future. Of those that responded, seven in ten (70.1%) indicated that *housing costs* (e.g. *rent*, *utilities*) would be a future barrier to moving out of home. Over six in ten reported *financial stability* (62.8%) as a potential barrier, while four in ten cited *availability of housing* (41.7%) as a potential barrier to moving out of home in the future.

While the gender results were generally consistent with national results, greater proportions of females than males reported *housing costs* (e.g. *rent*, *utilities*) and *financial stability* as barriers to moving out of home (76.5% and 68.6% compared

with 62.9% and 56.1%). Twice the proportion of females also reported *security/safety* as a potential barrier to moving out of home in the future (28.3% compared with 14.2% for males).

## What young people value

Young people were asked how much they valued *family relationships*, *financial security*, *friendships (other than family)*, *getting a job*, *physical health*, *mental health* and *school or study satisfaction*. The responses were consistent with previous years: *family relationships*, *friendships (other than family)* and *school or study satisfaction* were again ranked as young people's three most highly valued items (83.7%, 81.8% and 71.8% respectively). Around seven in ten respondents also placed a high value upon *mental health* and *physical health* (70.4% and 69.1% respectively).

## Issues of personal concern

Young people were asked to rank how concerned they had been about a number of issues over the past year. The responses for the top two concerns were consistent with previous years: *coping with stress* and *school or study problems*. *Mental health* was listed as an item for the first time in 2018 and was ranked the third highest rated issue of personal concern for young people. Over four in ten respondents indicated that they were either *extremely* or *very concerned* about *coping with stress* (43.1%). One third of young people were either *extremely* or *very concerned* about *school or study problems* (33.8%), while around three in ten were concerned about *mental health* (30.9%) and *body image* (30.4%). The proportion of females concerned about many of these issues was much higher than the proportion of males.

## Where young people go for help with important issues

Young people were asked to indicate from a number of sources where they would go for help with important issues in their lives. The top three sources of help for young people were *friend/s*, *parent/s or guardian/s* and *relative/family friend* (84.5%, 76.1% and 60.1% respectively). Around half of respondents indicated that they would go to a *GP or health professional* (53.8%), their *brother/sister* (53.3%) or the *internet* (49.4%) for help with important issues, while around four in ten indicated that they would go to their *teacher* for support (37.7%). A greater proportion of females than males indicated that they would go to their *friend/s* for help with important issues (86.6% compared with 82.8%), while slightly higher proportions of males would turn to their *parent/s or guardian/s* (78.1% compared with 75.6%).

For the first time in 2018, young people were asked if they had used the internet for help with important issues in their lives and to indicate which sources of support they had accessed from a list of services/sources. Nearly one third of young people used the internet to source *information about specific issues* (31.0%). Close to one in five young people used the internet to access an *online quiz or assessment tool* (19.0%) or for *personal stories or testimonies* (19.0%), while one in six had used the internet to

*chat one-on-one with someone who has had a similar experience* (16.5%) and for *information about available services* (16.5%).

## How well do young people feel their family gets along?

Young people were asked how well they felt their family gets along with one another. The majority of respondents rated their family's ability to get along very positively: 28.8% indicated that their family's ability to get along was *excellent* and 32.3% reported that it was *very good*. Around one in five young people did not report such a positive experience of family relationships, as they rated their family's ability to get along as either *fair* (11.5%) or *poor* (6.5%).

## Most important issues in Australia today

Young people were asked to list the three issues that they considered were the most important in Australia today. The top three issues identified in 2018 were *mental health* (43.0%), *alcohol and drugs* (28.7%) and *equity and discrimination* (23.4%). Between 2016 and 2018, the proportion of those indicating *mental health* as an important national issue has more than doubled: from 20.6% in 2016 to 43.0% this year. Since 2016, *bullying* has also been increasingly identified as a key issue facing the nation, while concerns about *population issues* have decreased.

A greater proportion of female than male respondents identified *mental health* (49.2% compared with 35.9%) and *equity and discrimination* (25.0% compared with 21.2%) as important issues facing Australia today. Conversely, a greater proportion of male than female respondents identified *alcohol and drugs* (32.2% compared with 26.4%) as an important issue.

## Activities that young people are involved in

As in previous years, the top three activities for young people were *sports (as a participant)* (63.2%), *sports (as a spectator)* (40.6%) and *volunteer work* (36.8%). Males were more likely to report participating in *sports (as a participant)* and *sports (as a spectator)*, while females were more likely to have participated in *volunteer work* and *arts/cultural/music activities* over the past year.

## Happiness and the future

Young people were asked to rate how happy they were with their life as a whole. The majority of young people (62.3%) indicated that they felt *happy/very happy* with their lives overall. Responses were similar for both males and females, although a greater proportion of males reported feeling *happy/very happy* with their lives as a whole than females (67.8% compared with 59.1%).

Young people were also asked to rate how positive they felt about the future. Results in 2018 are similar to those from previous years, with over six in ten (62.2%) respondents feeling either *very positive* or *positive* about the future. Over one quarter (27.9%) of young people felt *neither positive nor negative* about the future, while one in ten (9.9%) young people felt either *very negative* or *negative* about the future.

# Mission Australia Youth Survey

**In order to assess young people's journey into independence and the types of support they may require, the following discussion of the Youth Survey's findings is structured according to the outcomes Mission Australia services strive to achieve with the individuals, families and communities we work alongside. With the expectation that they can progress towards independence, Mission Australia provides services that aim to achieve the following outcomes for young people:**

**1 Developing and achieving** – young people need to be skilled and confident, in education and with access to tertiary education, training or employment.

All young people should have the best foundation for learning and development and be able to participate as valued members of society.

**2 Economic wellbeing** – young people should have access to the essentials in life and have good financial management skills. They should have pathways to economic participation, fulfilling employment and independent living.

**3 Healthy** – being healthy is a significant contributor to overall wellbeing and this includes participating in activities such as sport. Health incorporates both physical and mental health and Mission Australia believes that for young people to transition successfully into adulthood all aspects of health are important.

**4 Housed** – a supportive and stable home environment is a particularly important aspect of a young person's life; it is essential for good physical and mental health and has positive impacts on educational outcomes. Stable housing also provides a platform for other supports in the community, through schools or neighbours.

**5 Inclusive and cohesive** – having a strong sense of being included, having mutual support and feeling you have someone to call on at a time of need are critically important for young people. Having these bonds with the people around them plays an important part in transitioning to adulthood. Diversity needs to be respected and supported, with the benefits of this being seen as both strength building and protective.

**6 Connected and participating** – it is important that young people have a sense of belonging, feel part of the community and are given opportunities to participate in activities and events that allow them to develop relationships with others. Young people should have their voices heard and be actively involved in decisions affecting their lives.

**7 Safe** – feeling safe and keeping young people safe is a responsibility of the whole of society. Young people need to feel safe in their families, neighbourhoods and schools. All young people should have a safe, secure and stable home and be protected from bullying and discrimination at school and in their community.

**8 Supported and resourced** – young people and those around them such as their peers, family and relatives must have access to services to meet their needs. Mission Australia believes support is essential for young people, whether this be universal or more targeted support. These need to be quality services which are holistic and improve outcomes over time. A holistic approach considers all life domains including: housing, recreation, social participation, employment, finances, legal, education, child and family relationships, physical and mental health, alcohol and other drug use, cultural and personal identity. Services should produce evidence which helps improve service delivery. This includes listening to young people and including their opinions in service development.

# About the survey

## Survey background

In 2018, Mission Australia conducted its 17<sup>th</sup> annual survey of young people. As in previous years, the survey aimed to identify both the values and issues of concern to young people. A small number of amendments were made to the survey this year. Most notably, new questions were added to explore young people's perceptions surrounding any barriers which may impact on them finding work and moving out of home in the future, drug and alcohol issues, as well as questions around young people's use of the internet.

## Participation

In 2018, 28,286 young Australians aged 15-19 years participated in the survey. Of these, 87.5% of respondents completed the survey online and 12.5% completed surveys on paper.

## Areas of focus

As well as collecting valuable socio-demographic data, the *Youth Survey 2018* sought to capture the views and perspectives of young people on a broad range of issues. Topics covered by the survey this year included education and employment, barriers to employment, moving out of home, participation in community activities, general wellbeing, values and concerns, preferred sources of support, as well as feelings about the future.

## Methodology

Following approval from State and Territory Education Departments, as well as Catholic Education Offices, information about Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2018* and an electronic link to the online survey were distributed to all secondary school principals across Australia. Information was also distributed to Mission Australia services, networks of other service providers, Commonwealth, State/Territory and Local Government departments, youth organisations and other peak bodies.

For the first time in 2018, Mission Australia is ethically required to report de-identified information to participating schools for those young people whose responses to the Kessler 6 question indicate a probable serious mental illness. To enable this reporting, the method required the collection of date of birth information and, in QLD, the respondents' initials. This reporting was not a requirement in WA; as such, this information has not been collected.

## Changes in 2018

As previously mentioned, some changes were made to Mission Australia's *Youth Survey* this year. Details of these changes to the 2018 survey are outlined in the following:

- Respondents were asked whether they felt there were any barriers to finding work. If young people responded 'yes' to this question, they were prompted to indicate from a list of items which they saw as a barrier/s to finding work. The items included *discrimination, family responsibilities, job requirements, lack of family support, lack of information, lack of jobs, lack of skills/experience, mental health, physical health, school responsibilities, transport, where you live and other*.
- The following items were added to the personal concerns question this year: *social media, domestic and family violence, financial security, LGBTIQ issues, mental health and physical health*.
- In 2018, *mental health* and *physical health* were offered as separate items for the first time in the 'what do young people value' question.
- This year, an additional question was included that asked if, in the past year, the respondents had experienced any serious or stressful problems/issues, to which they could respond by ticking the statement that most applied to them from the following list: *I have had few or no problems; I have had some problems but I felt I could manage on my own; I have had some problems and I did get help; and I have had some problems but did not get help even though I thought I needed it*.
- An additional question was asked around the use of the internet for help with important issues in their lives and what type of online services/sources they have accessed. Respondents were able to give multiple responses from the following items: *online quiz or assessment tool, personal stories or testimonies, information about available services, information about specific issues, chat one-on-one with someone who has had a similar experience, counselling with a professional, support group or forum, online course or program and other*.
- In 2018, the survey asked respondents to identify the top three barriers that may prevent young people, who are dealing with a serious or stressful problem/issue, from getting the help that they need. Respondents were able to make three free-text responses.
- Respondents were asked a range of questions to understand their concerns on drug and alcohol issues at their family/peer level, in their neighbourhood, and in Australia.
- Respondents were asked a number of questions to understand their feelings of safety in their community in relation to trust, how comfortable they feel about using public spaces and walking alone after dark.
- Respondents were asked to identify from a list the potential barriers that may impact upon them moving out of home in the future.

Please note that not all questions asked in the survey are presented in the current report. These questions will inform other research publications to be released throughout 2019.

## **This report**

This report contains an executive summary, a national summary, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander summary and a chapter for each state and territory. In the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander chapter, the responses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are compared to those of non-Indigenous respondents.

Each of the chapters contains a breakdown of key data by gender and where appropriate, comparisons with previous years' data.

Please note that throughout the report, percentages in all tables, figures and text 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. Care needs to be taken when interpreting and generalising the results for certain states or territories because of the small sample size and the imbalance between the number of females and males participating in the survey.



# Policy context

## Over 28,000 young people across Australia have shared their hopes and concerns in this year's *Youth Survey*.

Young people continue to report a positive and optimistic outlook in life. Just under two thirds of respondents feel happy and positive with their lives as a whole, as well as their future. Many young people reported confidence in achieving their study and work goals; reported cohesive family relationships; and showed strong engagement with their communities through a range of activities.

However, many young people face challenges as they transition out of school, such as finding educational opportunities, employment or housing. The successes or difficulties experienced during the transition from school to either education or training are linked to outcomes beyond education and employment, including health outcomes and lifetime earnings.<sup>1</sup>

Young people nominated mental health as both a personal and national concern. The top two issues of personal concern for young people—coping with stress and school or study problems—are also closely linked with mental health.

Alongside mental health, young people continue to nominate alcohol and drugs and equity and discrimination in the top three issues facing Australia today.

Nearly four in ten respondents felt that they may face barriers while finding work, either during or after the completion of their studies. School responsibilities, lack of skills/experience and lack of jobs were the top three barriers to finding work cited by young people who reported the presence of barriers.

It is important that we have the right policies, programs and opportunities in place to give young people the confidence to pursue their post-school goals, to overcome any barriers they face to achieving them and to address their concerns.

Governments, educational institutions, health professionals, employers, families and community organisations all have a role in supporting young people to successfully transition into adulthood.

We need to ensure that all young people are healthy, safe and housed; feel included and connected within their communities; and have the necessary resources and supports to tackle the challenges they encounter in their lives.

In order to achieve these outcomes, we make the following recommendations to governments:

- Expand programs to support young people to re-engage with education;
- Invest in educational and practical resources to prepare young people for future work;

- Improve access to TAFE and apprenticeships for disadvantaged young people;
- Provide evidence-based universal mental health prevention and intervention programs in schools;
- Promote targeted public health messaging to reduce alcohol-related harm for all ages and invest in youth-specific alcohol and drug treatment programs and facilities;
- Provide early intervention programs for young people facing family conflict and mental health concerns in order to prevent homelessness;
- Increase Youth Allowance and rent assistance payments and boost investment in affordable and appropriate accommodation for young people;
- Build on the strengths of and address the challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people as a priority; and,
- Expand online and face-to-face services and resources for young people and their support networks including family and friends.

## Developing and achieving

A high percentage of young people reported wanting to further their education, with two thirds (66.7%) of respondents planning to go to university and 13.9% of young people planning to go to TAFE or college. Young people see education as critical as it provides the foundation for their future and the achievement of their goals.<sup>2</sup>

Half of respondents indicated high levels of confidence in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school. Encouragingly, the proportion of young people feeling slightly or not at all confident in their ability to achieve their post-school goals has halved: from 19.1% in 2017 to 9.5% in 2018.

## Educational disengagement

Most of the young people surveyed were still at school and, of those who were studying, 96.3% stated that they intended to complete Year 12. Positively, the majority of respondents reported that they were either very satisfied (12.9%) or satisfied (55.8%) with their studies.

**"I need to be more organised so I don't get so overwhelmed with stress and school and therefore don't reach the point where I lose motivation to care about doing well."**

**(F, 17, QLD)**

However, 7.1% of those who were studying were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their studies, which may potentially result in future disengagement from education.

<sup>1</sup> Youth Action and Western Sydney Regional Information and Research Service (WESTIR) 2018, 7

<sup>2</sup> Youth Action and Western Sydney Regional Information and Research Service (WESTIR) 2018, 8–9. See also Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 2008

At the same time, school or study satisfaction was highly valued by 71.8% of young people who responded to the *Youth Survey*.

Similar to the 2017 results, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who reported studying full-time was slightly smaller than their non-Indigenous peers (83.3% compared with 94.8% respectively). For those who were studying, the majority of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and non-Indigenous young people reported being either very satisfied or satisfied with their studies (56.8% compared with 71.7%).

It is encouraging to see low levels of dissatisfaction with studies. However, it is important to have programs in place for those who are at risk of disengaging or have disengaged from school to enable them to have a pathway into work or further study.

### Flexible Learning Options

Flexible Learning Options (FLO) was implemented by the South Australian Government as a social inclusion initiative to help address poor school retention rates. The program provides casework support and flexible learning programs for students aged 13-19, young parents and young people with disabilities up to 25 years who have disengaged with mainstream schooling. FLO provides a flexible, safe and supportive learning space that helps to foster feelings of independence, security and tolerance amongst students.

An independent evaluation was completed in 2018 that clearly demonstrates that the Mission Australia FLO program has a significant and positive impact on the lives of students.<sup>3</sup> In many instances FLO attendance was described by students as being personally transformative, potentially life-saving, and a significant driver of re-engagement and social inclusion. The evaluation showed that, as a result of attending the program and receiving casework support, the majority of FLO students are able to identify educational or job-related goals, as well as discover their ambitions and put strategies in place to achieve them.

**"More career planning help at college. I don't enjoy being at school but I want to gain qualifications. I have spoken to the college I go to and they can't help and neither can TAFE."**

**(M, 17, TAS)**

### Vocational and Education Training

There are significant barriers for disadvantaged young people when entering the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector, including financial and geographical constraints and limited literacy and numeracy skills.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> See University of Adelaide 2018

<sup>4</sup> Lamb et al. 2018, 39-40

Access to TAFE and apprenticeships could be improved through increased supports such as literacy and numeracy services and expanded opportunities for fee-free scholarships for disadvantaged young people.

### Try, Test and Learn (TTL) – Support for VET Students

Mission Australia is delivering a pilot program in South Australia as part of the Commonwealth government's Try, Test and Learn fund to support students at risk of disengaging by offering post-secondary VET studies to keep them engaged. The program also focuses on early intervention by using risk factors to identify students; helping them connect to available supports to reduce risks; and maintaining a relationship so that support can be offered quickly to resolve and stabilise escalating issues before students disengage.

### Economic wellbeing

Although just over four in ten young people were working part-time, over half of respondents were not in paid employment. 32.7% of female and 37.5% of male respondents were not in paid employment but were looking for work. Relatedly, 34.4% of respondents indicated plans to get a job after school.

While youth unemployment in Australia has dropped slightly over the past year, it currently sits at 11.2%, which is still more than double the general unemployment rate.<sup>5</sup> The rate of youth unemployment is even higher in regional areas.<sup>6</sup> The significant challenges of the labour market are recognised by the 12.2% of young people indicating lack of jobs as a barrier to finding work.

Young people face further economic challenges such as the increased casualization of work and a prolonged transition period from study to full-time employment.<sup>7</sup> This can negatively impact upon young people's levels of stress, as well as their financial stability.

### Barriers to work

For the first time in 2018, respondents were asked to indicate if there were any barriers that may be impacting upon them finding work. Almost two in five respondents expressed that there were barriers, with a greater proportion of females (42.8%) than males (32.9%) indicating the presence of barriers.

From those respondents who indicated there were barriers to finding work, the top three barriers were school responsibilities, lack of skills/experience and lack of jobs (20.0%, 14.5% and 12.2% respectively). Similarly, the *Foundation for Young Australians* has indicated that lack of jobs, lack of work experience, lack of appropriate education and lack of career management skills are hindrances for young people in securing full-time work.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018

<sup>6</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence 2018, 1

<sup>7</sup> Youth Action and Western Sydney Regional Information and Research Service (WESTIR) 2018, 18; The Smith Family 2014

<sup>8</sup> Foundation for Young Australians 2018

Work experience for young people can positively contribute to their overall wellbeing.<sup>9</sup> Yet, balancing school responsibilities with part-time work can deter young people from seeking employment and add to stress.<sup>10</sup>

Work experience whilst at school can enable an effective transition for young people after the completion of their studies by creating networks with future employers, developing transferable skills, and building clarity for their aspirations.<sup>11</sup>

Education institutions must therefore acknowledge that many young people balance the demands of study throughout secondary school with part-time work, and must recognise the benefits of this work experience without adding to the high levels of school and study stress experienced.

Investment in educational or practical resources in schools, specifically towards preparing young people for future work, could also be beneficial. Career development services, such as interview skills and building a CV should be made more accessible to young people.<sup>12</sup>

**“I believe that there needs to be more opportunities for young people to be able to gain the training needed to get jobs that allow them to support themselves and possibly their families.”**

**(M, 19, NSW)**

### School-Based Traineeships

The School Based Traineeships Program is funded through the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Jobs, Land and Economy Programme (JLEP). Its objective is to provide wrap-around support for disadvantaged or disengaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students in years 11 and 12 to stay in school whilst completing a part-time traineeship. The program supports students to balance their vocational and non-vocational requirements at school, their workplace and during transition from school into further education, training and employment. It provides culturally relevant case management support that is tailored to students' individual needs, academic requirements and workplace expectations. Mission Australia provides these traineeships in Queensland.

## Healthy

Mental health continues to be among the top personal and national concerns for many young people responding to the *Youth Survey* and young people also highly valued mental health and physical health in their lives.

<sup>9</sup> Youth Action and Western Sydney Regional Information and Research Service (WESTIR) 2018, 18

<sup>10</sup> Vickers, Lamb, Stephen, and Hinkley 2003

<sup>11</sup> Foundation for Young Australians 2018

<sup>12</sup> Polvere and Lim 2015

## Mental Health

Over four in ten young people identified mental health as an important issue facing Australia today (43.0%). This may be due to increased public awareness and mass media campaigns surrounding mental health that work to reduce stigma.<sup>13</sup>

The top issues of personal concern to young people relate to mental health and challenges to wellbeing: coping with stress, school or study problems, mental health and body image. It is vital that relevant support services and training are easily accessible to young people of all ages to help them manage these issues when they arise. This includes funding evidence-based universal mental health prevention and intervention programs in all schools.

Young females also continue to report higher levels of concern in relation to coping with stress, school or study problems, and body image than young males. The prevalence of young women indicating concern around body image has been attributed to the pervasive influence of how the media portrays a particular standard of beauty for young women.<sup>14</sup>

**“We need to accept that body image problems are more present than we want to believe. The amount of girls and boys in high school struggling with eating disorders is scary.”**

**(F, 15, TAS)**

That said, young men are not exempt from body image pressures, either.<sup>15</sup> Gender-sensitive mental health services are appropriate in this context in order to respond to the particular concerns, pressures and challenges young females and males face, whilst adapting to their individual support preferences.

Similarly, over one third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated coping with stress as the top issue of personal concern, and identified mental health as the top issue facing Australia today. It is alarming to see that almost one in five (18.5%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents felt very sad/sad with life as a whole in comparison to around one in ten (9.4%) non-Indigenous young people. Mental health services should be culturally safe, co-designed with and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations and health services.

### Shine and Strength Program

The Shine and Strength personal development program aims to equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to develop self-awareness and personal growth. These nine week programs are facilitated in various middle schools and youth detention centres throughout Darwin. ShineGIRL and STRENGTH programs are adaptable tools that are used to reach young females and males. Each session is delivered as a 60–90-minute presentation that covers topics such as self-worth, emotional wellbeing, healthy relationships and behaviours.

<sup>13</sup> Tye, Shand, and Christensen 2018

<sup>14</sup> Grogan 2017, 103-134; Harper and Tiggemann 2008; Hawkins et al. 2004

<sup>15</sup> Lewis 2012

## Alcohol and Drugs

Just under three in ten young people nominated alcohol and drugs as one of the most important issues that Australia faces today (28.7%). A much smaller percentage of young people nominated drugs and alcohol as a personal concern (either extremely or very concerned 3.7% and 3.8% respectively), however the proportion was higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (either extremely or very concerned 9.8% and 5.5% respectively).

Young people's drug and alcohol concerns and habits can be influenced by family, peers, communities and the media.<sup>16</sup> Continued and targeted public health messaging is required to reduce drug and alcohol-related harm for all ages across Australia.

**"Drugs and alcohol needs to stop in my community."**

(F, 16, NT)

For some young people, alcohol and drug dependence can be a serious issue that requires access to effective and appropriate treatment.<sup>17</sup> Youth-specific health services and facilities that cater to young people should be invested in to ensure their needs are met in a safe, secure and encouraging environment, to bring about positive long-term outcomes.

### Triple Care Farm

Triple Care Farm is an alcohol and other drugs program based in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales for young people aged between 16 and 24 years with co-morbid substance dependence and mental illness. This program includes a 12-week residential rehabilitation program and a six-month aftercare program to ensure participants have a smooth transition back into the community.

## Housed

### Homelessness

Homelessness and housing was identified as one of the top ten important issues facing Australia today by nearly one in ten (9.2%) young people. We know that family conflict and mental illness are key contributors to youth homelessness.<sup>18</sup> In this year's *Youth Survey*, almost one in five young people did not report a positive experience in their family relationships, rating their family's ability to get along as either fair or poor. Mental health concerns were also reported by many young people.

Early intervention is particularly crucial for young people in facilitating family reconciliation. Where a young person cannot remain with their family, safe, secure and affordable housing is critical.

<sup>16</sup> Crane et al. 2016, 24

<sup>17</sup> Department of Health 2004

<sup>18</sup> Roche and Barker 2017, 12. See also Mission Australia 2017; Mission Australia 2018

**"Young people leaving care should have firm housing options to work toward. I had a Uni offer but was made homeless at Christmas and have not had secure or safe housing since."**

(F, 18, VIC)

### Trinity Hill

Trinity Hill is a combined accommodation and training facility in North Hobart for young people aged 16 to 25 who are at risk of homelessness and/or have a disability. Trinity Hill offers safe, affordable long-term housing with on-site support to access education, training, employment and other opportunities. Trinity Hill is a partnership between Anglicare Tasmania, Community Housing Limited and Mission Australia.

### Barriers to moving out of home

Young people were asked for the first time this year whether they felt there were any barriers which may impact them from moving out of home in the future. The *Youth Survey* revealed that seven in ten young people indicated housing costs (e.g. rent and utilities) as a future barrier to moving out of home. We know that young people in Australia face a largely unaffordable housing market. In 2018, less than 0.01% of properties surveyed by Anglicare Australia were affordable and appropriate for single people on Youth Allowance.<sup>19</sup>

Over six in ten young people nominated financial stability as a potential barrier and four in ten nominated availability of housing. In addition to concerns about the labour market, financial stability concerns may also be linked to the low payment rates of Youth Allowance. According to the 2018 *Poverty in Australia* report, 64% of those on Youth Allowance are living below the poverty line.<sup>20</sup>

**"There needs to be more assistance for low income families/individuals so we can afford the high rent."**

(F, 18, VIC)

An increase in Youth Allowance and rent assistance payments, as well as investment in appropriate and affordable housing for young people is required. This is particularly important for those young people who do not have the financial support of their families or need to live independently to pursue work or study.

## Inclusive and cohesive

For all young people, feeling included and valued in their families, friendships, and communities is a significant aspect in their journey through adolescence.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Youth Action and Western Sydney Regional Information and Research Service (WESTIR) 2018, 14; Daley, Coates, and Wiltshire 2018; Anglicare Australia 2018

<sup>20</sup> Davidson, Saunders, Bradbury, and Wong 2018

<sup>21</sup> Robinson 2006

This is clear in the high percentages of young people valuing family relationships and friendships (other than family) in the *Youth Survey* (83.7% and 81.8% respectively).

**“Make sure that the relationships in my life are of a good quality and I am able to balance my relationships work and school, making sure I’m the best friend I can be.”**

**(M, 17, VIC)**

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in particular, connection to culture can be a protective factor and promoter of social and emotional wellbeing. Programs such as peer-to-peer mentoring with appropriate cultural youth mentors can be beneficial.

Young people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were also well represented in the *Youth Survey*: 15.0% of respondents stated that they were born overseas and 19.4% spoke a language other than English at home. Policies and programs that seek to benefit young people must also be responsive and adaptive to meet the needs of young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

### **South West Youth Peer Education Program (SWYPE)**

South West Youth Peer Education (SWYPE) assists vulnerable young people from the age of 12 up to 17, who are based in the greater Liverpool and Campbelltown areas of Sydney. Assistance is offered via one-to-one case management, workshops and outreach programs for schools and the wider community. SWYPE has developed a number of unique programs over its almost two-decade existence. Most recently, SWYPE developed Camp PRO-TEEN: a joint Aboriginal and Pacific camp that uses cultural awareness and mentoring to promote positive choices for young people.

## **Connected and participating**

Participating in activities helps young people to develop social networks and interpersonal skills.<sup>22</sup> Similar to previous years, sports (as a participant and spectator) and volunteer work were the top three activities that young people participated in over the past year. Additionally, over one third of respondents had participated in arts/cultural/musical activities.

Research has identified a link between creativity and mental health recovery.<sup>23</sup> Young people can benefit from creative arts therapies, such as art, music and dance, as a form of expressing emotion, improving social and coping skills, promoting self-esteem and strengthening resilience.<sup>24</sup>

Expanded access to creative arts facilities and activities within schools or communities could be a valuable support, particularly

<sup>22</sup> Dworkin, Larson, and Hansen 2003, 17

<sup>23</sup> Van Lith, Schofield, and Fenner 2013

<sup>24</sup> Coholic 2011, 303-17

for young people from disadvantaged families or who face financial challenges.<sup>25</sup> Other programs that foster participation and build community connections should also be provided as part of a strengthening communities approach.

**“I need to make solid friendships and connections with others who can support me as I continue to overcome my anxiety issues. I need to be able to connect with other young people which is hard for me being in a small town with little activities for young people who don’t like sport to do.”**

**(F, 19, SA)**

### **Empower Youth (Southern Melbourne Empower Youth Partnership)**

Empower Youth is a Victorian government initiative and Mission Australia is a member of the service delivery partnership in Dandenong and Casey, Victoria. The Southern Melbourne Empower Youth Partnership will create a ‘Community of Support’ – an environment where young people and youth workers come together at a social drop-in space to engage with peers and positive role models; make connections with services and resources; and develop aspirational plans for community participation. The objective is to create positive developmental pathways and for young people to invest in a competent identity as a valuable social contributor. There will be an emphasis on working with those from new and emerging communities, as well as existing vulnerable communities including the Pasifika community. The model will utilise the specialist programs of multiple local youth services to support young people to achieve strong outcomes.

## **Safe**

Over one in six young people nominated bullying as an issue of national concern in this year’s *Youth Survey* (17.4%). Additionally, over one in eight (13.5%) young people reported crime, safety and violence as an important issue in Australia today.

**“I have gotten myself into fights both physical and verbal. The fight was because I was being bullied.”**

**(M, 15, NSW)**

It is essential that young people feel safe in their homes, schools and communities in order to live a healthy and happy life. It is imperative that youth outreach programs are easily accessible for young people and cater to their specific needs as and when they arise.

<sup>25</sup> Mission Australia 2017

### Open Doors

Open Doors supports young people aged 12 to 18 and their families living in Mirrabooka (WA) and surrounding suburbs. Support is provided to young people experiencing issues with drug and alcohol abuse, family breakdown, unemployment, homelessness and mental health. The program is an outreach-based service, which means service staff meet with the young person on their terms including at school, home or anywhere that is suitable for the young person.

## Supported and resourced

As seen in previous years, friends (84.5%), parents or guardians (76.1%) and relatives or family friends (60.1%) were the most commonly cited sources of help for young people.

Young people need to feel confident in seeking help and know whom they can speak to and trust. At the same time, it is important that those providing support for young people—family, friends, teachers or professionals—are equipped with the tools and resources to address young people's concerns effectively.

**“Not getting the help they need because of costs or other factors that could be easily fixed but aren't.”**

**(N/S, 15, NT)**

Most young people rely heavily on the support of their friends during times of need, highlighting the need to inform young people about mental health support. More than half of young people surveyed indicated they would also turn to a GP or health professional when seeking help with important issues, and more than one third of young people cited teachers and school counsellors as sources of support.

For the first time in 2018, young people were also asked if they had used the internet for help with important issues in their lives and indicate which sources of support they had accessed from a list of services/sources.

The top three uses of the internet for support were: to source information about specific issues (31.0%), to access an online quiz or assessment tool (19.0%), and to access personal stories or testimonies (17.4%).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents nominated chatting one-on-one with someone who has had a similar experience (24.2%) as the top source of support when seeking help online. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people also indicated using the internet to source information about specific issues (23.3%) and information about available services (16.9%).

**“Not knowing where to seek help as online help services are too intimidating to call.”**

**(F, 15, NSW)**

Thus, investment in online tools and resources that provide a range of information, assessments, testimonies, and opportunities to connect are needed to meet the help-seeking preferences of young people.

### beyondblue

beyondblue is an online mental health organisation that caters to people of all demographics that are suffering from different forms of mental illness, including young people and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They offer a wide variety of services including:

- NewAccess: a specially-trained and experienced coach that provides confidential support for people in setting practical goals to get back on track through six free sessions, either over the phone or face-to-face.<sup>26</sup>
- BeyondNow: a free app that creates a safety plan towards suicide prevention, with support from a health professional or a trusted friend or family member.
- Online forums where safe and open discussions surrounding mental health are exchanged between users residing in Australia.

<sup>26</sup> Beyondblue 2015

## References

- Anglicare Australia. 2018. "2018 Rental Affordability Snapshot." Ainslie, ACT: Anglicare Australia. At <http://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/final---rental-affordability-snapshotb811d9309d6962baacc1ff0000899bca.pdf?sfvrsn=4>, accessed August 30, 2018.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2018. "6202.0 - Labour Force, Australia, August 2018 - Labour Force Commentary August 2018." At <http://abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/6202.0Main%20Features2August%2018?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=6202.0&issue=August%202018&num=&view=>, accessed September 24, 2018.
- Beyondblue. 2015. "NewAccess Coach." *Beyondblue*. At <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/newaccess>, accessed September 25, 2018.
- Brotherhood of St Laurence. 2018. "An Unfair Australia? Mapping Youth Unemployment Hotspots." Fitzroy, VIC: Brotherhood of St Laurence.
- Coholic, Diana A. 2011. "Exploring the Feasibility and Benefits of Arts-Based Mindfulness-Based Practices with Young People in Need: Aiming to Improve Aspects of Self-Awareness and Resilience." *Child & Youth Care Forum* 40, no. 4: 303–17.
- Crane, Phil, Tim Moore, Maureen O'Regan, Danielle Davidson, Cameron Francis, and Cassandra Davis. 2016. *Youth Alcohol and Drug Practice Guide 5: Working with Families and Significant Others*. Brisbane, QLD: Dovetail. At [https://www.dovetail.org.au/media/1190/dovetail\\_gpg\\_5\\_working-with-families-and-significant-others.pdf](https://www.dovetail.org.au/media/1190/dovetail_gpg_5_working-with-families-and-significant-others.pdf).
- Daley, John, Brendan Coates, and Trent Wiltshire. 2018. *Housing Affordability: Re-Imagining the Australian Dream*. Sydney, NSW: Grattan Institute. At <https://grattan.edu.au/report/housing-affordability-re-imagining-the-australian-dream>, accessed September 25, 2018.
- Davidson, P., P. Saunders, B. Bradbury, and M. Wong. 2018. *Poverty in Australia, 2018*. ACOSS/UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership Report no. 2. Sydney, NSW: ACOSS. At [https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ACOSS\\_Poverty-in-Australia-Report\\_Web-Final.pdf](https://www.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/ACOSS_Poverty-in-Australia-Report_Web-Final.pdf).
- Department of Health. 2004. "Treatment of Young People with Alcohol and Other Drug Problems." *Department of Health - Australian Government*. At <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/drugtreat-pubs-modpsy-toc~drugtreat-pubs-modpsy-3~drugtreat-pubs-modpsy-3-9~drugtreat-pubs-modpsy-3-9-tre>, accessed September 25, 2018.
- Dworkin, Jodi B., Reed Larson, and David Hansen. 2003. "Adolescents' Accounts of Growth Experiences in Youth Activities." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 32, no. 1: 17–26.
- Foundation for Young Australians. 2018. "The New Work Reality." FYAs New Work Order report series Sydney, NSW: Foundation for Young Australians. At [https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FYA\\_TheNewWorkReality\\_sml.pdf](https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/FYA_TheNewWorkReality_sml.pdf), accessed September 24, 2018.
- Grogan, Sarah. 2017. *Body Image: Understanding Body Dissatisfaction in Men, Women and Children*. 3rd edition. London: Routledge.
- Harper, Brit, and Marika Tiggemann. 2008. "The Effect of Thin Ideal Media Images on Women's Self-Objectification, Mood, and Body Image." *Sex Roles* 58, no. 9–10: 649–57.
- Hawkins, Nicole, P. Scott Richards, H. Mac Granley, and David M. Stein. 2004. "The Impact of Exposure to the Thin-Ideal Media Image on Women." *Eating Disorders* 12, no. 1: 35–50.
- Lamb, Stephen, Quentin Maire, Anne Walstab, Graeme Newman, Esther Doecke, and Merryn Davies. 2018. *Improving Participation and Success in VET for Disadvantaged Learners. Research Report*. Adelaide, SA: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Lewis, Vivienne. 2012. "Body Image: Is It Just for Girls?" *Australian Psychological Society* 34, no. 4. At <https://www.psychology.org.au/inpsych/2012/august/lewis>, accessed September 24, 2018.
- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. 2008. "Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians." Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. At [http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/\\_resources/national\\_declaration\\_on\\_the\\_educational\\_goals\\_for\\_young\\_australians.pdf](http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/national_declaration_on_the_educational_goals_for_young_australians.pdf).
- Mission Australia. 2017a. "Youth Mental Health and Homelessness Report." Sydney, NSW: Mission Australia. At <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/research/young-people/720-mission-australia-youth-mental-health-and-homelessness-report/file>, accessed September 20, 2018.
- . 2017b. "Concepts of Community: Young People's Concerns, Views and Experiences. Findings from the Youth Survey 2016." Sydney, NSW: Mission Australia. At <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/research/young-people/738-mission-australia-concepts-of-community-report/file>, accessed September 20, 2018.
- . 2018. *Young People's Experiences of Homelessness Findings from the Youth Survey 2017*. Sydney, NSW: Mission Australia. At <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/research/young-people/780-young-people-s-experience-of-homelessness-findings-from-the-youth-survey-2017/file>, accessed September 25, 2018.

Polvere, Rose-Anne, and Patrick Lim. 2015. "Career Development Supporting Young Australians: A Literature Review." Fitzroy, VIC: Brotherhood of St Laurence. At <https://cica.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Career-Development-supporting-young-Australians-2015.pdf>.

Robinson, Elly. 2006. "Young People and Their Parents: Supporting Families through Changes That Occur in Adolescence." Melbourne, VIC: Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse and Australian Institute of Family Studies. At <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/publication-documents/b1.pdf>.

Roche, Steven, and Justin Barker. 2017. "Youth Homelessness and Its Relationship with Family Conflict: Models for Policy and Practice." Melbourne, VIC: Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University. At [http://www.acu.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0015/1402152/Roche\\_S\\_and\\_Barker\\_J\\_2017\\_Youth\\_homelessness\\_and\\_its\\_relationship\\_with\\_family\\_conflict\\_-FIN.pdf](http://www.acu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/1402152/Roche_S_and_Barker_J_2017_Youth_homelessness_and_its_relationship_with_family_conflict_-FIN.pdf).

The Smith Family. 2014. "Young People's Successful Transition to Work: What Are the Pre-Conditions?" The Smith Family Research Report Sydney, NSW: The Smith Family Australia. At <https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/~ /media/files/research/reports/young-people-transition-to-work-report.ashx?la=en>.

Tye, Michelle, Fiona Shand, and Helen Christensen. 2018. "Suicide Prevention: The Role of Community Campaigns." *Medical Journal of Australia InSight*. At <https://www.doctorportal.com.au/mjainsight/2018/35/suicide-prevention-the-role-of-community-campaigns/>, accessed September 24, 2018.

University of Adelaide. 2018. "What does Success Look Like? An Evaluation of Mission Australia's Flexible Learning Options Program (SA)." University of Adelaide. At: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/research/young-people/765-what-does-success-look-like-an-evaluation-of-mission-australia-s-flexible-learning-options-flo-program-south-australia/file>.

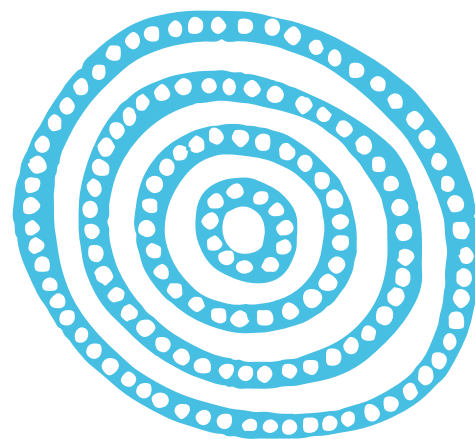
Van Lith, Theresa, Margot J. Schofield, and Patricia Fenner. 2013. "Identifying the Evidence-Base for Art-Based Practices and Their Potential Benefit for Mental Health Recovery: A Critical Review." *Disability and Rehabilitation* 35, no. 16: 1309–23.

Vickers, Margaret, Lamb, Stephen, and John Hinkley. 2003. "Student Workers in High School and beyond: The Effects of Part-Time Employment on Participation in Education, Training and Work." Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth Research Report 30 LSAY Research Reports Australian Council for Education Research. At [http://research.acer.edu.au/lsay\\_research/34](http://research.acer.edu.au/lsay_research/34).

Youth Action, and Western Sydney Regional Information and Research Service (WESTIR). 2018. "Inequality in Australia: A Young Person's Perspective." Woolloomooloo, NSW: Youth Action. At <http://apo.org.au/system/files/187901/apo-nid187901-991961.pdf>, accessed September 24, 2018.



# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander summary



## Profile of respondents

In total, 1,594 (5.8%) respondents to Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2018* identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Of this total, 1,277 (4.6%) respondents identified as Aboriginal, while 173 (0.6%) identified as Torres Strait Islander (the remaining 0.5% identified as both).

### Gender breakdown

Just under half (48.5%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were male and 45.7% were female.

### Language background other than English

In total, 60 (3.8%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported speaking an Indigenous language at home.

### Disability

A total of 254 (16.7%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they had a disability. The most frequently cited disabilities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were (in order of frequency): autism, physical disabilities, learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

## Education

As indicated in Table 2.1, 83.3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were studying full-time (compared with 94.8% of non-Indigenous respondents). A slightly higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males reported that they were studying full-time (86.3% compared with 83.8%), while a slightly greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males (10.5%) than females (8.0%) reported not studying at all.

Respondents who reported that they were currently studying were asked how satisfied they were with their studies. Responses to this question were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from *very satisfied* to *very dissatisfied*. As in previous years, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported that they were either *very satisfied* (10.8%) or *satisfied* (46.0%) with their studies. Around one in eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were *very dissatisfied* or *dissatisfied* with their studies (6.5% and 6.3%). As shown in Table 2.2, a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females reported feeling *satisfied* with their studies (52.5% compared with 46.5% of males), while similar proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males reported feeling *very satisfied* with their studies (9.3% and 10.0% respectively).

Table 2.1: Participation in education

	Non-Indigenous respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %
Studying full-time	94.8	83.3	86.3	83.8
Studying part-time	2.0	6.1	5.8	6.0
Not studying	3.2	10.5	8.0	10.3

Table 2.2: Satisfaction with studies

	Non-Indigenous respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2018 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2017 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2016 %
Very satisfied	12.9	10.8	9.3	10.0	9.6	14.2
Satisfied	56.7	46.0	52.5	46.5	49.0	49.9
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	23.8	30.3	30.7	31.8	28.2	26.6
Dissatisfied	5.2	6.3	4.2	7.8	7.3	4.0
Very dissatisfied	1.4	6.5	3.3	4.0	5.8	5.2

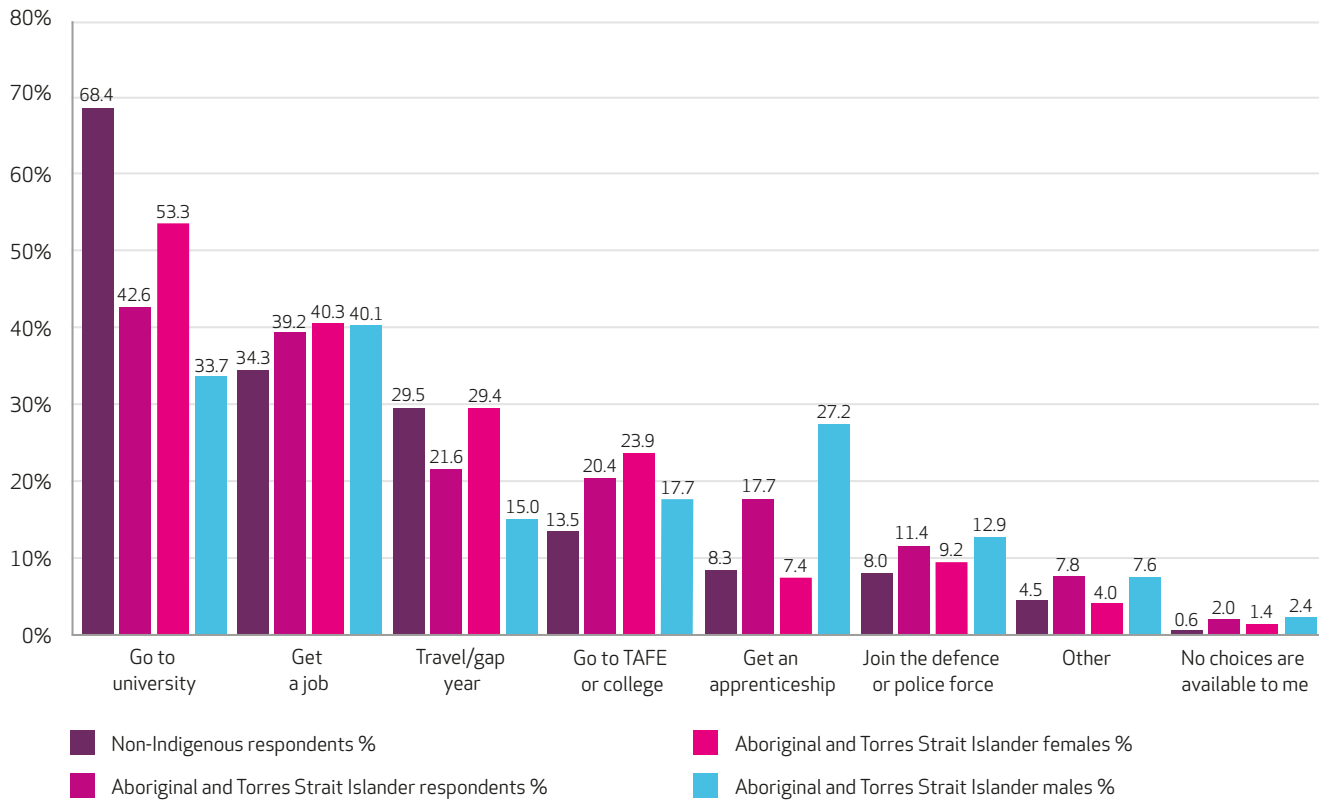
Of those who were still at school, 90.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents stated that they intended to complete Year 12 (compared with 96.8% of non-Indigenous respondents). The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males who indicated that they did not intend to complete Year 12 was twice that of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (12.7% compared with 5.9% respectively).

Respondents who were still at school were also asked what they planned to do after leaving school. Figure 2.1 shows that just over four in ten (42.6%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents reported plans to *go to university* after school, while just under four in ten indicated plans to *get a job* (39.2%). Around one in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated *travel/gap year* plans (21.6%) or that they planned to *go to TAFE or college* (20.4%) after completing school. Overall, 17.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people planned to *get an apprenticeship*, while just over one in ten indicated that they planned to *join the defence or police force* (11.4%). A small minority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (2.0%) indicated feeling that *no choices were available to me* after leaving school.

### Gender differences

The most frequently reported post-school aspiration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females was to *go to university* (53.3%), which was notably higher than for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males (33.7%). Conversely, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males most frequently indicated plans to *get a job* (40.1%), which was the second most reported plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (40.3%). While nearly twice the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females indicated *travel/gap year* plans (29.4% compared with 15.0% of males), almost four times the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males reported plans to *get an apprenticeship* after finishing school (27.2% compared with 7.4% of females).

Figure 2.1: Plans after leaving school

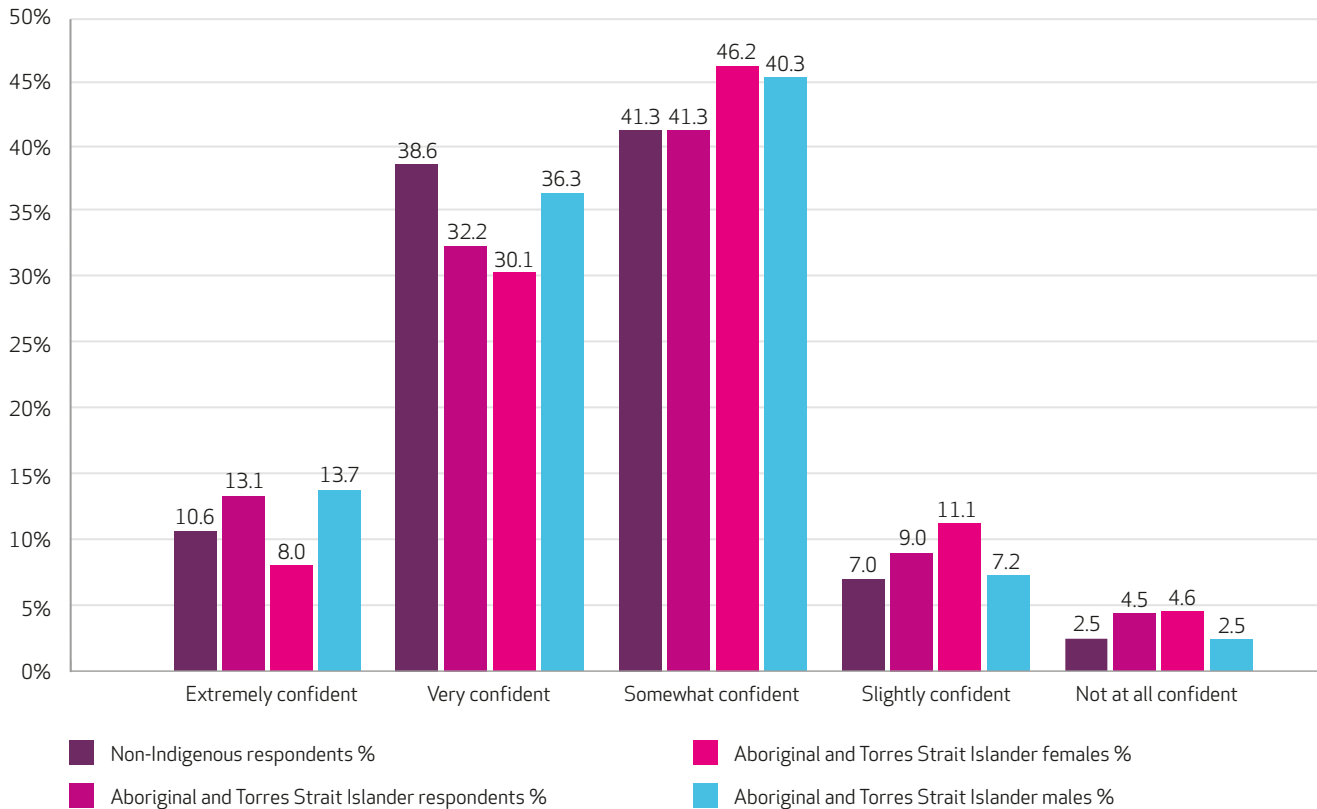


Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option. Items are listed in order of frequency amongst all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.

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

In 2018, respondents were asked how confident they were in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after finishing school. Responses for this question were rated on a 5 point scale from *extremely confident* to *not at all confident*. As highlighted in Figure 2.2, over four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated high levels of confidence in their ability to achieve study/work goals: 13.1% indicated that they were *extremely confident* and 32.2% indicated that they were *very confident*. This is slightly lower than for non-Indigenous respondents (45.3% compared with 49.2%). However, just over one in eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were less confident in their ability to achieve their goals: 9.0% reported feeling *slightly confident*, while 4.5% were *not at all confident* in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school. Higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male than female respondents reported feeling *extremely confident* or *very confident* (13.7% and 36.3% compared with 8.0% and 30.1%).

Figure 2.2: Confidence in achieving study/work goals



## Employment

Respondents were asked whether they currently have paid work. Those who answered that they have paid employment were asked to specify how many hours they worked per week, on average. Table 2.3 shows participation in paid employment among both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous respondents. A minority (2.7%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported full-time paid employment, which is higher than for non-Indigenous respondents (0.6%). However, this result is not surprising given the percentage of respondents who were still at school. Over one third (34.1%) reported part-time employment (compared with 42.7% of non-Indigenous respondents). Over six in ten (63.2%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported that they were not in paid employment: 43.6% reported that they were looking for work, while 19.6% were not looking for work. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents who indicated that they were looking for work was higher than for non-Indigenous respondents (43.6% compared with 34.0%).

### Gender differences

Similar proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female and male respondents reported full-time employment (2.1% compared with 2.5%), while a higher proportion of female respondents were employed part-time (37.0% compared with 30.8% of males). Over four in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males indicated that they were looking for work (44.9% compared with 45.8% respectively).

Table 2.3: Participation in paid employment

	Non-Indigenous respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %
Employed full-time	0.6	2.7	2.1	2.5
Employed part-time	42.7	34.1	37.0	30.8
Not in paid employment, looking for work	34.0	43.6	44.9	45.8
Not in paid employment, NOT looking for work	22.7	19.6	16.0	21.0

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

## Barriers to finding work

For the first time in 2018, young people were asked whether they felt there are any barriers which impact on them finding work. Over four in ten (43.9%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they felt there are barriers compared with just under four in ten (38.4%) non-Indigenous respondents. A notably higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (49.0%) than males (37.6%) reported the presence of barriers.

Respondents who indicated the presence of barriers were asked to indicate from a number of items the barrier/s that were preventing them from finding work. Figure 2.3 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated each item to be a barrier.

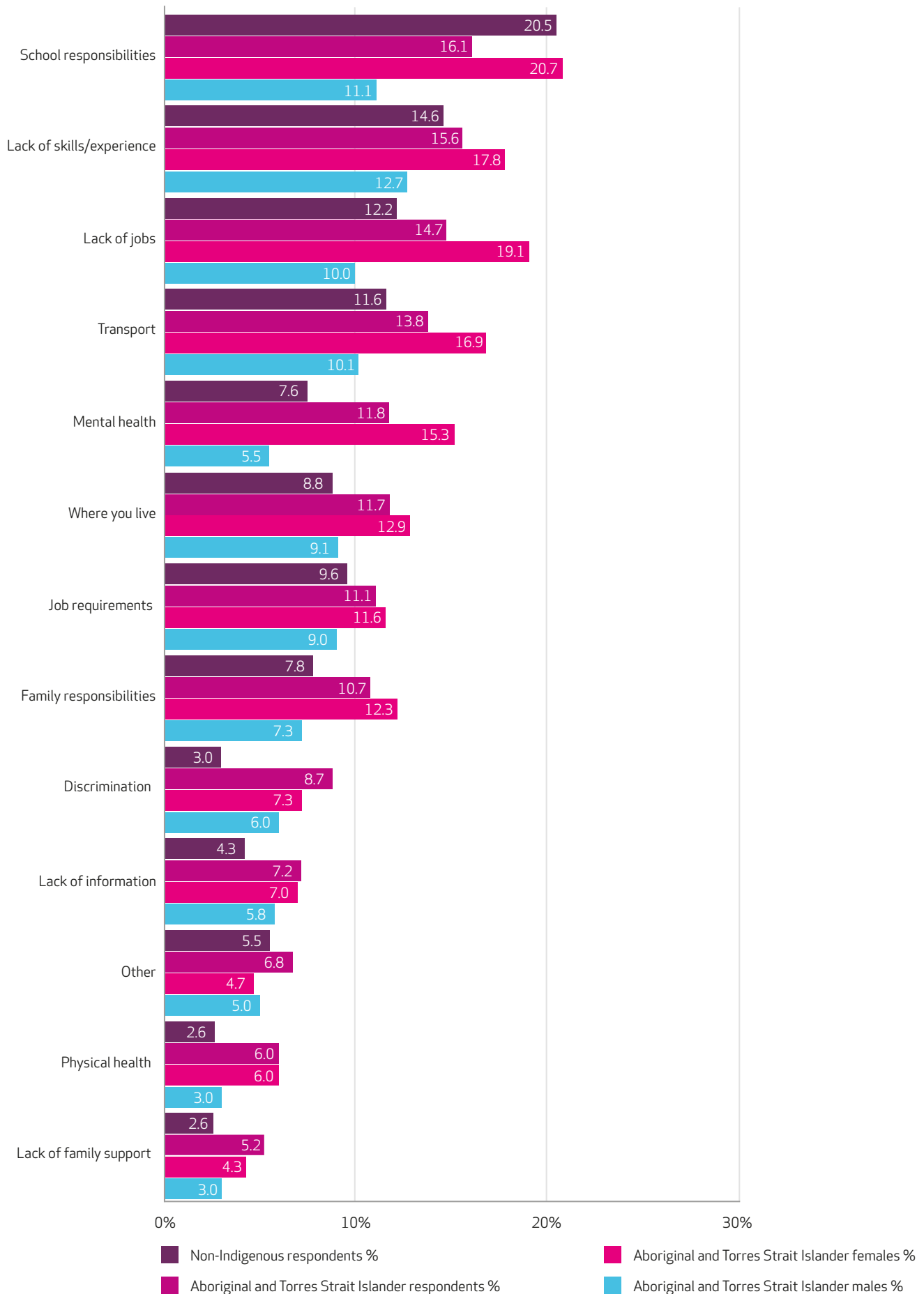
- *School responsibilities, lack of skills/experience* and *lack of jobs* were the three most commonly cited barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people finding work (16.1%, 15.6% and 14.7% respectively).
- Over one in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they saw *transport, mental health, where you live, job requirements* or *family responsibilities* as barriers to finding work (13.8%, 11.8%, 11.7%, 11.1% and 10.7% respectively).

### Gender differences

As shown in Figure 2.3, the top three barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were *school responsibilities, lack of skills/experience* and *lack of jobs*. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, the top barrier was *lack of skills/experience*, followed by *school responsibilities* and *transport*.

- Nearly twice the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females noted *school responsibilities* and *lack of jobs* as barriers to finding work (20.7% and 19.1% compared with 11.1% and 10.0% of males).
- Almost three times the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females reported *mental health* as a barrier which may impact on them finding work (15.3% compared with 5.5% of males).

Figure 2.3: Barriers to finding work



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

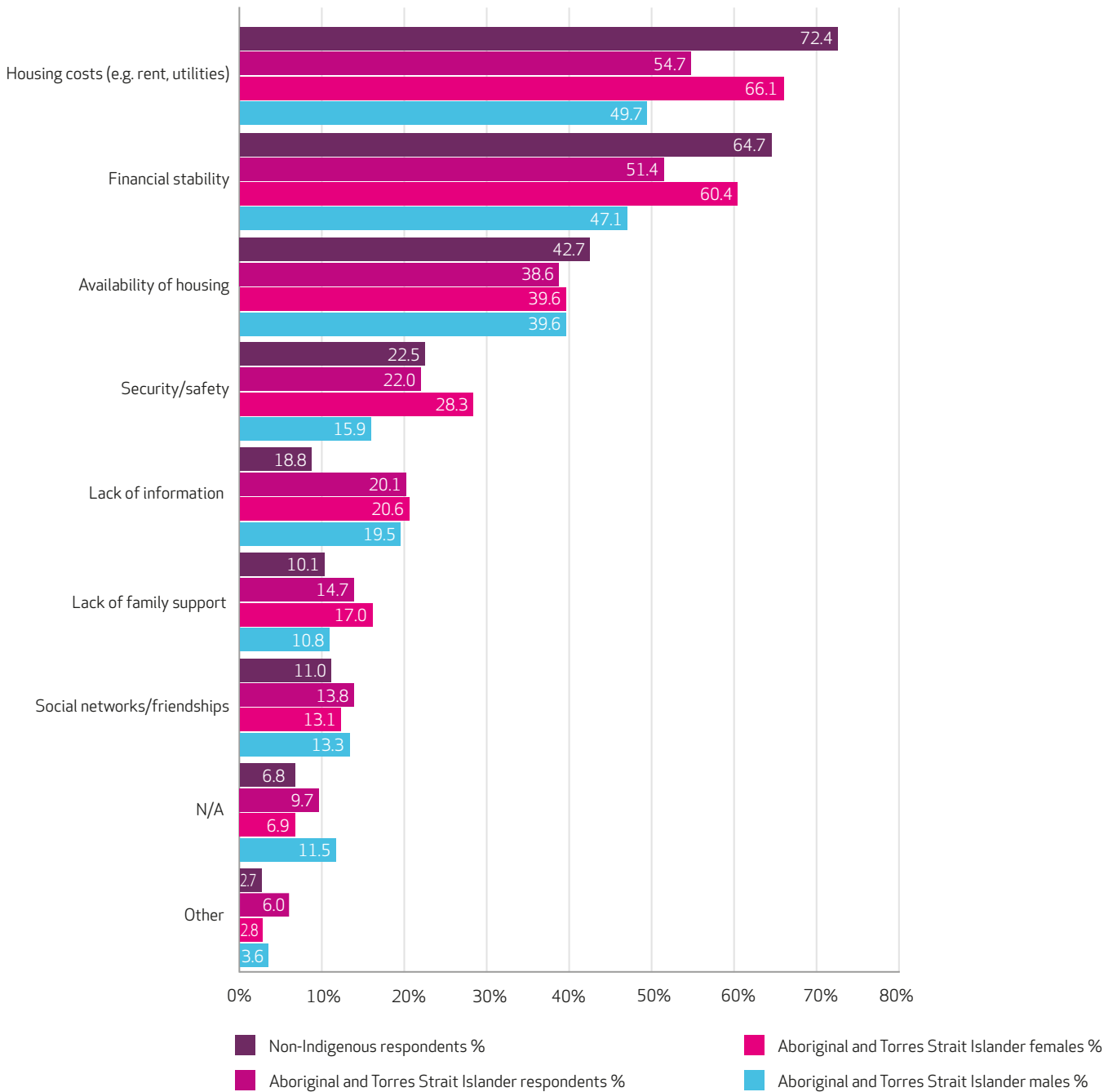
## Barriers to moving out of home

For the first time in 2018, young people were asked whether they felt there were any barriers which may impact upon them moving out of home in the future. Of those that responded, over half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (54.7%) indicated that *housing costs* (e.g. rent, utilities) would be a future barrier to moving out of home, followed by *financial stability* (51.4%) and *availability of housing* (38.6%). These were the same top three barriers as for non-Indigenous young people.

### Gender differences

Greater proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males reported *housing costs* (e.g. rent, utilities) and *financial stability* as barriers to moving out of home (66.1% and 60.4% compared with 49.7% and 47.1%). Almost twice the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females reported *security/safety* as a potential barrier to moving out of home in future (28.3% compared with 15.9% of males).

Figure 2.4: Barriers to moving out of home



Note: Items are listed in order of frequency amongst all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.

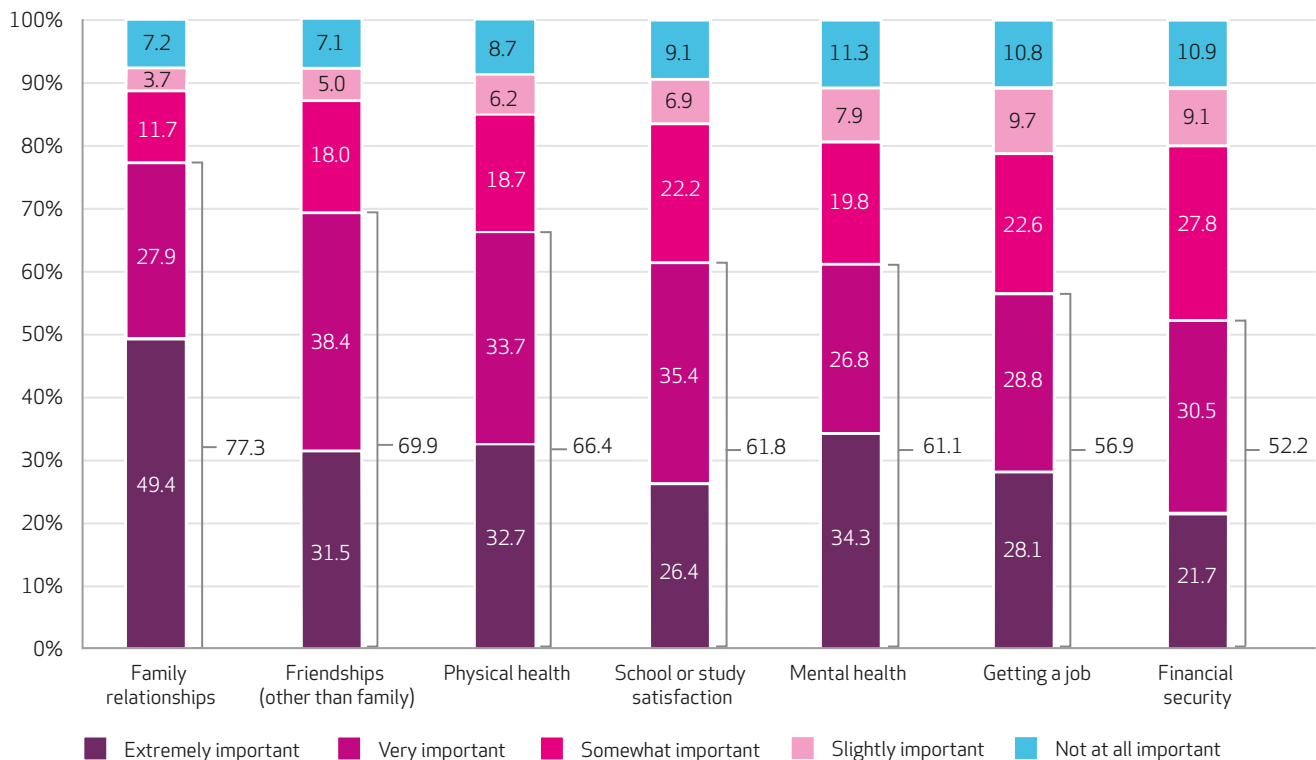
## What do young people value?

In 2018, young people were again asked how much they valued *family relationships*, *financial security*, *friendships (other than family)*, *getting a job*, *mental health*, *physical health* and *school or study satisfaction*. Responses for these items were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from *extremely important* to *not at all important*. In Figure 2.5, the items were ranked according to the summed responses for *extremely important* and *very important* for each item.

The three most highly valued items for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents this year were *family relationships*, *friendships (other than family)* and *physical health*. The next most valued items were *school or study satisfaction* and *mental health*.

- Nearly eight in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people placed a high value on *family relationships* (*extremely important*: 49.4%; *very important*: 27.9%).
- Seven in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents highly valued *friendships (other than family)* (*extremely important*: 31.5%; *very important*: 38.4%).
- Over six in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people placed a high value upon *physical health* (*extremely important*: 32.7%; *very important*: 33.7%), *school or study satisfaction* (*extremely important*: 26.4%; *very important*: 35.4%) and *mental health* (*extremely important*: 34.3%; *very important*: 26.8%).
- More than half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents valued *getting a job* (*extremely important*: 28.1%; *very important*: 28.8%) and *financial security* (*extremely important*: 21.7%; *very important*: 30.5%).

Figure 2.5: What young people value



Note: Items were ranked according to the summed responses for *extremely important* and *very important* for each item.

## Gender differences

*Family relationships* and *friendships (other than family)* were the two most highly valued items for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males, as shown in Table 2.4. The third highest rated item for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females was *school or study satisfaction*, whereas for males the third highest rated item was *physical health*.

- *Family relationships* were highly valued by 84.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (*extremely important*: 54.8%; *very important*: 29.9%) and 79.0% of males (*extremely important*: 48.8%; *very important*: 30.2%).
- Almost three quarters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (*extremely important*: 31.7%; *very important*: 42.3%) and males (*extremely important*: 33.2%; *very important*: 39.8%) placed a high value on *friendships (other than family)*.
- *School or study satisfaction* was highly valued by 71.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (*extremely important*: 28.4%; *very important*: 43.2%), compared with 59.3% of males (*extremely important*: 25.8%; *very important*: 33.5%).
- *Physical health* was highly valued by around seven in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males (*extremely important*: 35.8%; *very important*: 34.5%) and females (*extremely important*: 30.4%; *very important*: 37.6%).



Table 2.4: What young people value by gender

<b>Females</b>	<b>Extremely important %</b>	<b>Very important %</b>	<b>Somewhat important %</b>	<b>Slightly important %</b>	<b>Not at all important %</b>
<b>Family relationships</b>	<b>54.8</b>	<b>29.9</b>	9.0	4.1	2.1
<b>Friendships (other than family)</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>42.3</b>	18.5	5.1	2.5
Physical health	30.4	37.6	19.9	7.9	4.0
<b>School or study satisfaction</b>	<b>28.4</b>	<b>43.2</b>	19.2	5.1	4.2
Mental health	36.9	30.9	18.4	9.1	4.8
Getting a job	27.5	32.2	24.2	9.5	6.5
Financial security	21.1	34.5	28.5	9.4	6.5
<b>Males</b>	<b>Extremely important %</b>	<b>Very important %</b>	<b>Somewhat important %</b>	<b>Slightly important %</b>	<b>Not at all important %</b>
<b>Family relationships</b>	<b>48.8</b>	<b>30.2</b>	13.5	3.4	4.1
<b>Friendships (other than family)</b>	<b>33.2</b>	<b>39.8</b>	18.5	4.7	3.7
<b>Physical health</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>34.5</b>	18.2	5.6	5.9
School or study satisfaction	25.8	33.5	26.6	7.9	6.2
Mental health	33.5	27.6	22.4	7.2	9.2
Getting a job	29.0	30.0	21.9	10.7	8.5
Financial security	20.7	30.9	29.7	10.2	8.5

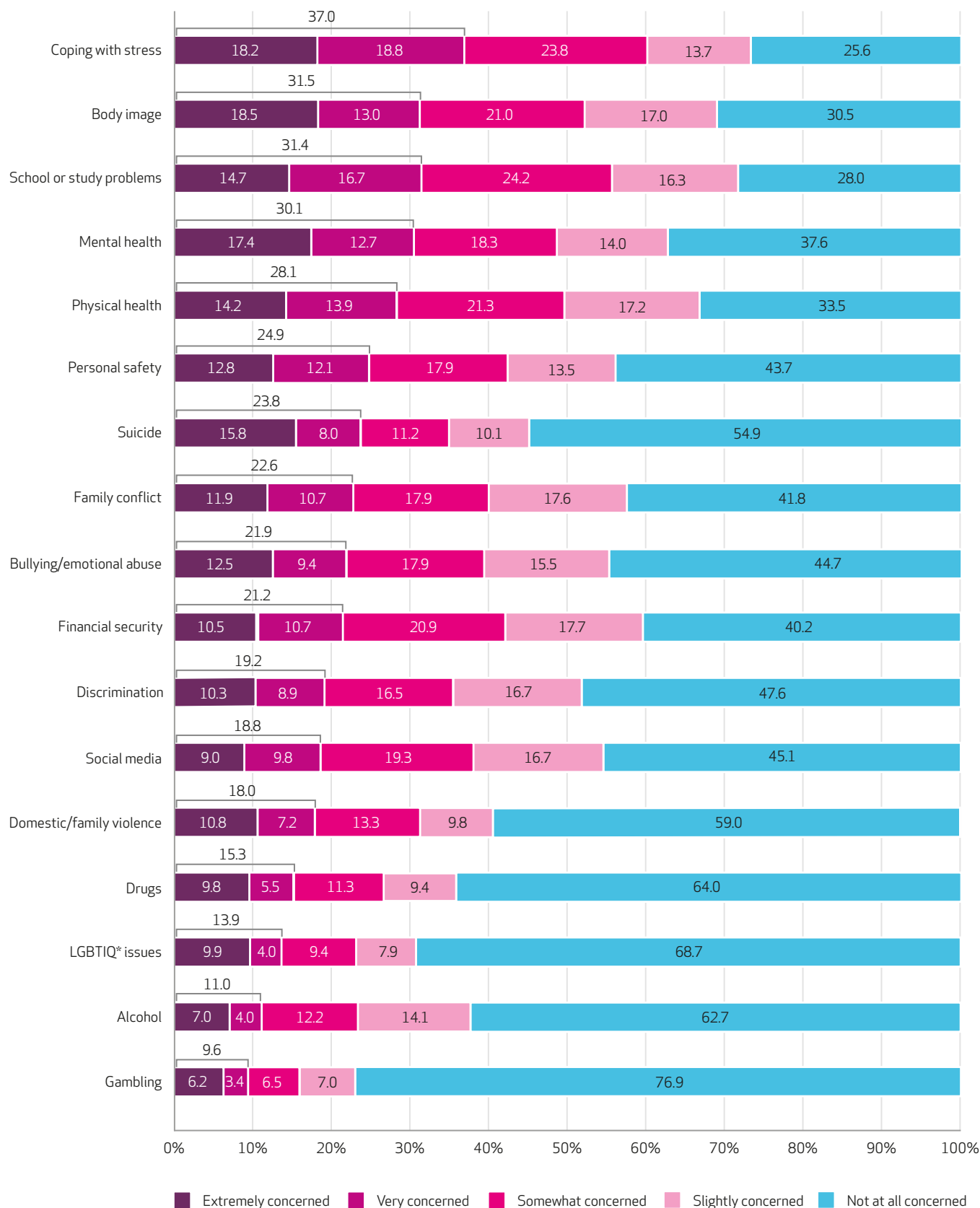
Note: Items were ranked according to the summed responses for *extremely important* and *very important* for each item. Items are listed in order of frequency amongst all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.

## What issues are of personal concern to young people?

Respondents were asked to rate how concerned they were about a number of issues, shown in Figure 2.6. Responses were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from *extremely concerned* to *not at all concerned*. The items were ranked in order of concern according to the summed responses for *extremely concerned* and *very concerned* for each item. The top three issues of personal concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were *coping with stress*, *body image* and *school or study problems*.

- *Coping with stress* was the top issue of concern, with 37.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicating that they were either *extremely concerned* (18.2%) or *very concerned* (18.8%) about this issue.
- *Body image* was a major concern for almost one third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (*extremely concerned*: 18.5%; *very concerned*: 13.0%).
- *School or study problems* was also a highly rated issue of concern for 31.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents (*extremely concerned*: 14.7%; *very concerned*: 16.7%).
- Three in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were either *extremely concerned* (17.4%) or *very concerned* (12.7%) about *mental health*.

Figure 2.6: Issues of personal concern to young people



Note: Items were ranked according to the summed responses for *extremely concerned* and *very concerned* for each item.

\*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer (LGBTIQ) issues.

## Gender differences

*Coping with stress* was the top issue of personal concern for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males. *Body image* was the second highest rated issue of concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, while *physical health* was the second highest rated personal concern for males. The third most noted concern for both females and males was *school or study problems*. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females concerned about these issues (and many of the other issues) was much higher than the proportion of males.

- *Coping with stress* was a major concern for half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (*extremely concerned*: 24.6%; *very concerned*: 26.1%), compared with one quarter of males (*extremely concerned*: 9.0%; *very concerned*: 15.3%).
- Over three times the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (43.3%) than males (17.6%) indicated *body image* was a major concern.
- *School or study problems* was a major issue of concern for over two in five (41.1%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (*extremely concerned*: 17.5%; *very concerned*: 23.6%), compared with one in five (20.8%) males (*extremely concerned*: 8.1%; *very concerned*: 17.5%).
- Just over three in ten (31.0%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females (*extremely concerned*: 14.3%; *very concerned*: 16.7%) and over one in five (22.6%) males (*extremely concerned*: 9.2%; *very concerned*: 13.4%) were concerned about *physical health*.

Table 2.5: Issues of personal concern to young people by gender

Females	Extremely concerned %	Very concerned %	Somewhat concerned %	Slightly concerned %	Not at all concerned %
<b>Coping with stress</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>26.1</b>	25.3	13.2	10.8
<b>Body image</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>20.6</b>	23.9	15.5	17.3
<b>School or study problems</b>	<b>17.5</b>	<b>23.6</b>	26.7	16.8	15.4
Mental health	22.0	16.5	21.0	17.4	23.1
Physical health	14.3	16.7	26.3	21.4	21.3
Personal safety	14.4	13.8	21.3	15.9	34.5
Suicide	16.5	10.8	14.3	11.0	47.4
Family conflict	13.8	14.3	22.1	19.5	30.3
Bullying/emotional abuse	13.2	14.4	20.7	19.3	32.4
Financial security	10.6	16.0	24.5	18.0	30.9
Discrimination	9.0	10.5	20.9	20.9	38.7
Social media	8.3	12.0	25.5	19.4	34.8
Domestic/family violence	10.1	9.0	16.2	9.9	54.7
Drugs	8.7	6.1	12.3	9.9	63.1
LGBTIQ* issues	6.1	5.9	10.2	9.9	67.9
Alcohol	3.9	4.5	14.6	16.1	61.0
Gambling	2.4	2.7	6.3	7.2	81.4

Table 2.5: Issues of personal concern to young people by gender (continued)

Males	Extremely concerned %	Very concerned %	Somewhat concerned %	Slightly concerned %	Not at all concerned %
<b>Coping with stress</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>15.3</b>	24.7	16.0	34.9
Body image	9.3	8.3	20.3	21.1	41.0
<b>School or study problems</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>12.7</b>	24.7	18.5	35.9
Mental health	8.8	11.2	17.4	12.8	49.9
<b>Physical health</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>13.4</b>	18.7	16.0	42.7
Personal safety	7.0	12.0	16.3	13.6	51.0
Suicide	9.6	5.9	8.6	10.7	65.2
Family conflict	5.9	8.9	15.8	18.9	50.5
Bullying/emotional abuse	7.3	6.7	16.6	14.3	55.1
Financial security	6.0	7.3	19.1	20.1	47.5
Discrimination	5.9	8.5	14.9	15.3	55.3
Social media	4.9	8.5	16.2	16.9	53.6
Domestic/family violence	6.2	6.2	11.3	11.2	65.2
Drugs	5.4	5.3	10.4	10.7	68.1
LGBTIQ* issues	6.1	3.0	8.7	6.7	75.5
Alcohol	4.5	4.5	11.2	14.3	65.3
Gambling	4.4	4.3	6.7	7.6	76.9

Note: Items were ranked according to the summed responses for *extremely concerned* and *very concerned* for each item. Items are listed in order of frequency amongst all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents. \*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer (LGBTIQ) issues.

## Where do young people go to for help with important issues?

Young people were asked to indicate from a number of sources where they would go for help with important issues in their lives. Figure 2.7 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated that they would go to the particular source for support.

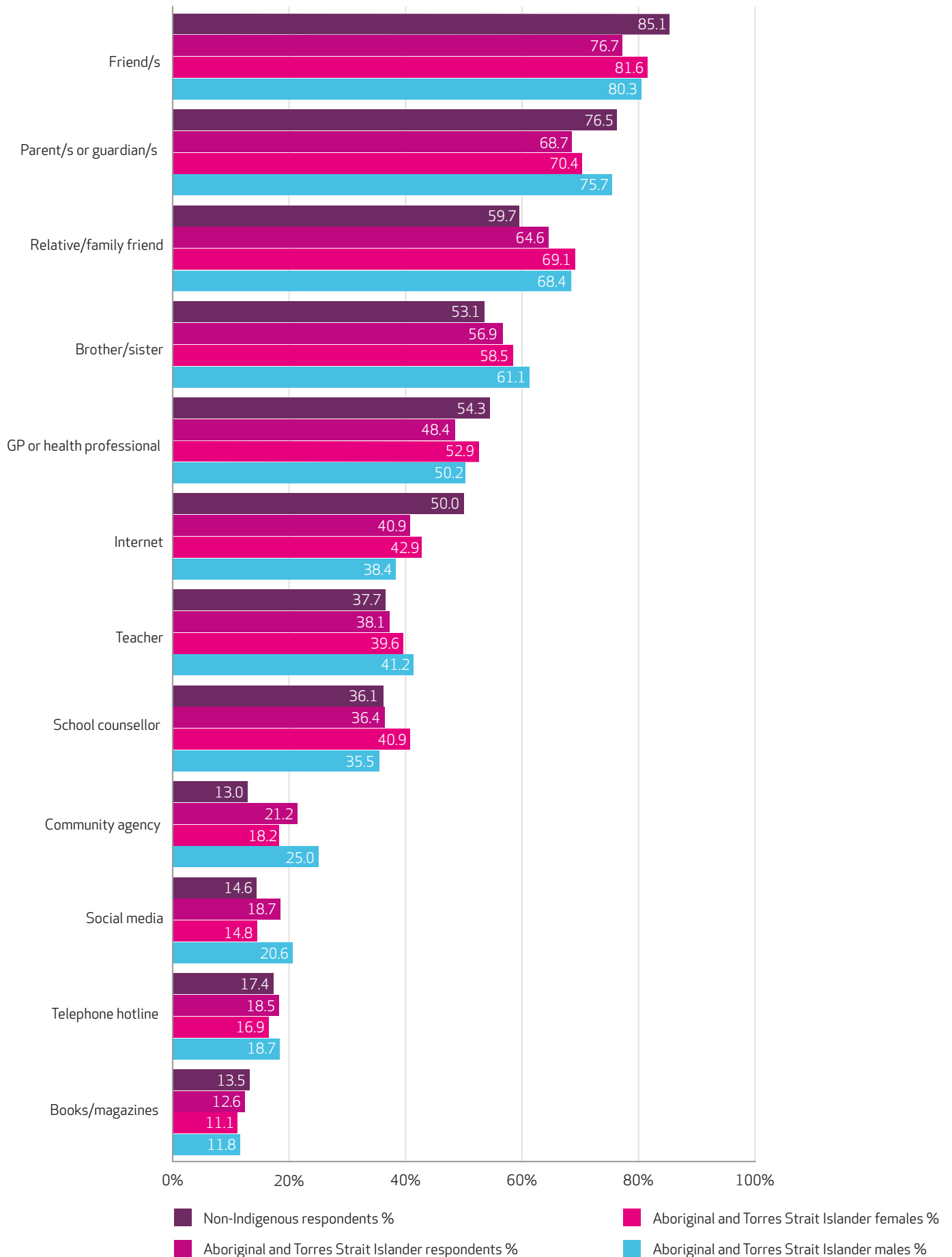
- *Friend/s, parent/s or guardian/s* and *relative/family friend* were the three most commonly cited sources of help for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (76.7%, 68.7% and 64.6% respectively).
- A total of 56.9% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they would go to their *brother/sister* for help with important issues in their lives.
- Almost half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated that they would turn to a *GP or health professional* (48.4%) and around four in ten to the *internet* (40.9%) as a source of help with important issues.

### Gender differences

As shown in Figure 2.7, the top three sources of help for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males were *friend/s, parent/s or guardian/s* and *relative/family friend*.

- Around eight in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female and male respondents indicated that they would go to their *friend/s* for help with important issues (81.6% and 80.3% respectively).
- A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males indicated they would go to their *parent/s or guardian/s* for help (75.7% compared with 70.4% of females).
- Similar proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female and male respondents indicated that they would turn to their *relative/family friend* (69.1% compared with 68.4%), their *brother/sister* (58.5% compared with 61.1%) or a *GP or health professional* (52.9% compared with 50.2%) for support.

Figure 2.7: Where young people go for help with important issues



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

For the first time in 2018, young people were asked if they had used the internet for help with important issues in their lives and to indicate which sources of support they had accessed from a list of services/sources. As shown in Table 2.6, just under one quarter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people indicated that they used the internet to *chat one-on-one with someone who has had a similar experience* (24.2%) and to *source information about specific issues* (23.3%). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people also used the internet for *information about available services* (16.9%) and to use an *online quiz or assessment tool* (14.9%).

Table 2.6: Internet use for important issues

	Non-Indigenous respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %
<b>Chat one-on-one with someone who has had a similar experience</b>	16.2	<b>24.2</b>	<b>24.1</b>	<b>23.7</b>
<b>Information about specific issues</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>23.3</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>19.5</b>
<b>Information about available services</b>	16.7	<b>16.9</b>	<b>18.5</b>	<b>14.5</b>
Online quiz or assessment tool	<b>19.6</b>	14.9	18.2	11.8
Counselling with a professional	11.7	14.7	17.3	10.9
Other	7.4	13.9	6.3	13.4
Personal stories or testimonies	<b>18.0</b>	13.3	15.1	10.5
Support group or forum	8.2	11.2	10.6	10.4
Online course or program	5.0	8.9	6.0	9.0

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

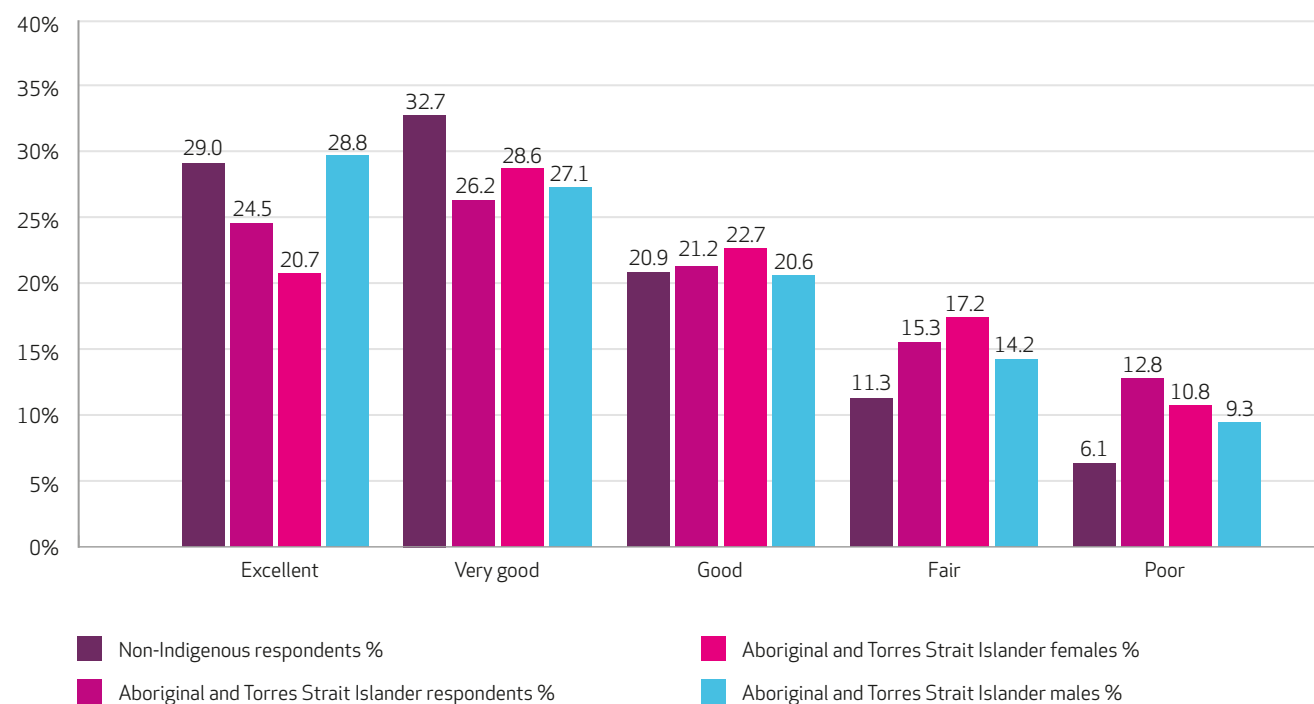
## Gender differences

As shown in Table 2.6, there were slight differences between females and males in relation to their use of the internet to seek help for important issues. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, the three most indicated sources of help accessed on the internet were seeking *information about specific issues* (27.9%), to *chat one-on-one with someone who has had a similar experience* (24.1%) and finding *information about available services* (18.5%). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, the most indicated sources of online support were to *chat one-on-one with someone who has had a similar experience* (23.7%), to *source information about specific issues* (19.5%) and *information about available services* (14.5%).

## How well do young people feel their family gets along?

Respondents were asked how well they felt their family gets along with one another. Responses to this question were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from *excellent* to *poor*. Figure 2.8 shows that half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents rated their family's ability to get along very positively: 24.5% indicated that their family's ability to get along was *excellent* and 26.2% rated it as *very good*. However, almost three in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents did not report such a positive experience of family relationships; they rated their family's ability to get along as either *fair* (15.3%) or *poor* (12.8%). A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females indicated that their family's ability to get along was *excellent* (28.8% compared with 20.7%).

Figure 2.8: Family's ability to get along



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

Young people were asked to list the three issues they considered were the most important in Australia today. The information provided by respondents was categorised and is listed in order of frequency in Table 2.7. In 2018, the top three issues identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were *mental health*, *alcohol and drugs* and *equity and discrimination*. This is the first time that *mental health* has been identified as the most important issue in Australia by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

- Over one third (35.5%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people identified *mental health* as an important issue in Australia today.
- Over three in ten Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people identified *alcohol and drugs* (32.3%) and one in five identified *equity and discrimination* (20.6%) as important issues in Australia today.
- Just over one in six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents identified *bullying* as a major issue (18.0%).
- Since 2016, *mental health* and *bullying* have been increasingly identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people as key issues facing the nation. Conversely, concerns about *the economy and financial matters* and *the environment* have declined since 2016.

### Gender differences

*Mental health* was the top issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, ahead of *alcohol and drugs*. Conversely, *alcohol and drugs* was the top issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, followed by *mental health*. The third most important issue in Australia today for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females was *bullying*, whereas for males it was *equity and discrimination*.

- A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males identified *mental health* (47.5% compared with 29.0%), *equity and discrimination* (22.2% compared with 19.9%) and *bullying* (22.9% compared with 16.5%) as important issues in Australia today.
- Conversely, a slightly greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females identified *alcohol and drugs* as an important issue (34.3% compared with 32.4%).

Table 2.7: Most important issues in Australia today

	Non-Indigenous respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2017 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2016 %
<b>Mental health</b>	<b>43.5</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>47.5</b>	<b>29.0</b>	<b>27.6</b>	<b>14.4</b>
<b>Alcohol and drugs</b>	<b>28.5</b>	<b>32.3</b>	<b>32.4</b>	<b>34.3</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>30.9</b>
<b>Equity and discrimination</b>	<b>23.6</b>	<b>20.6</b>	22.2	<b>19.9</b>	<b>23.1</b>	<b>21.5</b>
Bullying	17.3	18.0	<b>22.9</b>	16.5	12.7	11.6
Crime, safety and violence	13.5	14.6	16.2	13.8	11.6	12.5
The economy and financial matters	11.6	11.4	10.1	13.6	10.2	13.9
Employment	7.9	9.1	8.8	11.0	8.3	10.5
Homelessness/housing	9.3	7.8	10.4	7.2	6.4	7.7
Health	11.6	7.6	5.8	8.5	5.9	8.2
The environment	9.3	6.8	6.9	7.6	5.6	8.0

Note: Items are listed in order frequency amongst all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents.

## What activities are young people involved in?

Young people were asked to identify the activities that they have been involved in over the past year from the list of options shown in Table 2.8.

- As in previous years, the top three activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were *sports (as a participant)* (59.9%), *sports (as a spectator)* (37.7%) and *arts/cultural/music activities* (36.3%).
- Over three in ten (31.8%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents indicated that they had participated in *volunteer work*.
- One quarter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people reported participating in *youth groups and activities* (25.8%) and *student leadership activities* (25.2%).

## Gender differences

As shown in Table 2.8, the top activity for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males was *sports (as a participant)*. The second and third most indicated activities differed between genders. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, the second activity was *arts/cultural/music activities* (42.9%), followed by *volunteer work* (36.4%). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, *sports (as a spectator)* (43.5%) was the second top activity, followed by *arts/cultural/music activities* (30.5%).

- A total of 65.7% of male respondents and 56.8% of female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were involved in *sports (as a participant)* over the past year.
- A larger proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander male than female respondents were involved in *sports (as a spectator)* (43.5% compared with 30.8%).
- Greater proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females than males participated in *arts/cultural/music activities* and *volunteer work* (42.9% and 36.4% compared with 30.5% and 26.9% respectively).



Table 2.8: Activities young people were involved in over the past year

	Non-Indigenous respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2018 %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %
<b>Sports (as a participant)</b>	<b>63.7</b>	<b>59.9</b>	<b>56.8</b>	<b>65.7</b>
<b>Sports (as a spectator)</b>	<b>41.1</b>	<b>37.7</b>	30.8	<b>43.5</b>
<b>Arts/cultural/music activities</b>	36.7	<b>36.3</b>	<b>42.9</b>	<b>30.5</b>
Volunteer work	<b>37.5</b>	31.8	<b>36.4</b>	26.9
Youth groups and activities	22.4	25.8	26.6	23.3
Student leadership activities	27.7	25.2	26.9	24.0
Religious groups/activities	19.0	17.0	15.0	14.3
Environmental groups/activities	10.9	15.2	13.2	14.0
Political groups/organisations	3.8	6.5	2.9	5.1

Note: Items are listed in order of frequency amongst all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents

## How happy are young people?

Young people were asked to rate how happy they were with their life as a whole on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 indicates feeling *very sad*, 5 indicates *not happy or sad*, and 10 indicates they felt *very happy*. In line with recommendations from the authors of this question,<sup>1</sup> responses were standardised on a scale of 0–100, in which 100 is rated as the happiest. For reporting purposes, the responses have been categorised into three groupings: 70–100 range as *happy/very happy*; 40–60 as *not happy or sad*; 0–30 as *very sad/sad*. As Table 2.9 shows, half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (50.2%) responded in the range 70 to 100, which indicates that most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people felt happy overall with their lives (compared to 63.0% of non-Indigenous respondents). A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males reported feeling *happy/very happy* with their lives as a whole than females (58.8% compared with 46.9%).

Table 2.9: How happy young people are

	Non-Indigenous respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %
Happy/Very happy (70–100)	63.0	50.2	46.9	58.8
Not happy or sad (40–60)	27.5	31.3	37.8	29.0
Very sad/Sad (0–30)	9.4	18.5	15.5	12.1

## How do young people feel about the future?

Young people were asked how positive they felt about the future and to rate their response on a 5 point scale from *very positive* to *very negative*. Table 2.10 shows that the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents felt *very positive* or *positive* about the future.

- Over half (56.3%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents felt either *positive* (38.2%) or *very positive* (18.1%) about the future.
- Almost one in six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents felt *negative* (7.0%) or *very negative* (7.8%) about the future.
- A higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females reported feeling *very positive* about the future (20.6% compared with 14.6%).

<sup>1</sup> Robert A. Cummins and Anna LD. Lau, *Personal Wellbeing Index – School Children (PWI-SC) (English)*, 3rd ed. (Melbourne, VIC: Australian Centre on Quality of Life, Deakin University, 2005) <<http://www.acqol.com.au/uploads/pwi-sc/pwi-sc-english.pdf>>

Table 2.10: Feelings about the future

	<b>Non-Indigenous respondents %</b>	<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2018 %</b>	<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females %</b>	<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males %</b>	<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2017 %</b>	<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents 2016 %</b>
Very positive	15.3	18.1	14.6	20.6	17.2	18.4
Positive	47.3	38.2	38.8	41.9	41.7	36.0
Neither positive nor negative	27.9	29.0	34.8	26.4	28.3	27.9
Negative	6.8	7.0	8.2	5.8	5.5	6.3
Very negative	2.8	7.8	3.6	5.3	7.4	11.4

## Acknowledgements

Mission Australia would like to thank the many educational institutions, youth and community organisations, government agencies, corporates, philanthropic organisations and others who helped to raise awareness and engage young people in the *Youth Survey 2018*.

These include:

- Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)
- ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS)
- Advance Diversity Services
- Alpine Shire Council
- Aspect (Autism Spectrum Australia)
- Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth
- batyr
- Brimbank City Council
- Brisbane City Council
- Burnie City Council
- Butterfly Foundation
- Carers NSW
- CareSouth - Shoalhaven Youth Support Service
- Central Coast Community Council (CCCC)
- Central Desert Regional Council
- Central Grampians LLEN
- Centrecare - Kalgoorlie
- Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CYMHS) QLD
- City of Darwin
- City of Greater Geelong
- City of Mandurah
- City of Onkaparinga
- City of Port Phillip Youth Services Network
- City of Rockingham
- City of Swan
- City of Sydney
- City of Whittlesea
- Community Legal Centres NSW
- Darwin and Rural Workers with Youth Network
- District Council of Streaky Bay
- Echo Youth and Family Services
- Ethnic Communities Council NSW
- Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA)
- Fusion Youth
- Gippsland PHN
- Golden Plains Shire Council
- Greater Bunbury Youth Sector
- headspace (Darwin)
- Health Networks (Department of Health, WA)
- Hillsong Australia Youth
- Hobsons Bay City Council
- Inner West Council (NSW)
- Junction Australia - Kangaroo Island Community Centre
- Life Saving Victoria
- Maribyrnong City Council - Phoenix Youth Club
- Midcoast Council
- Migration Council - Young Women's Advisory Group
- MOIRA (Disability and Youth Services)
- Multicultural NSW (NSW Government)
- Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network (MYAN)
- National Children's Commissioner
- National Union of Students
- New South Wales Council of Social Service (NCOSS)
- Northern Midlands Council (TAS)
- Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS)
- Office of the Children's Commissioner (NT)
- Our Watch
- P&Cs Queensland
- Peninsula Health (VIC)
- Police Citizens Youth Clubs (PCYC)
- ReachOut
- Regional Development Australia - Murraylands and Riverland
- Rise Network (WA)
- Scouts QLD
- Settlement Council of Australia
- Settlement Services International
- Shelter NSW
- Shire of Harvey
- Shire of Wongan Ballidu
- Sociology @ the University of Wollongong
- Southern Downs Regional Council
- Swan City Youth Service
- The Australian Sociological Association (TASA)
- The Salvation Army - Youth Department
- Together SA/Wellbeing of Adelaide Youth
- Town of East Fremantle
- Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS)
- Volunteering Australia
- Wellington Shire Council
- Wombat Housing and Support Services
- Yarra Ranges Council
- Yfoundations
- YMCA NSW
- YMCA SA
- YMCA Victoria
- Youth Action
- Youth Affairs Council of SA
- Youth Affairs Council of WA
- Youth Affairs Network (QLD)
- Youth Network of Tasmania
- Youth Work WA
- Youth+ Edmund Rice Education Australia
- YouthLink (WA)

Mission Australia would also like to acknowledge the many organisations and individuals who promoted the survey via social media.

## Who is Mission Australia?

Mission Australia is a non-denominational Christian community service organisation, with more than 155 years of experience in standing together with Australians in need on their journey to independence.

Our evidence-based, client-centred services are focused on reducing homelessness and strengthening communities across Australia. Our services are tailored to the needs and preferences of the clients and communities we serve. Our programs range from early intervention to intensive wrap-around services. They include services targeting homelessness; providing integrated family support; parenting programs; early childhood education; mental health services; residential drug and alcohol programs; youth programs; access to safe and secure housing; and programs to build capacity, resilience and opportunity for local communities.

We work in partnership with others to achieve our goal. This includes communities, supporters, government, businesses and other organisations. We measure our impact, collecting evidence of what works to inform our service design and delivery, and to advocate for change.


We stand together with Australians in need until they can stand for themselves.


## Thank you


This publication would not have been possible without the 28,286 young people who completed Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2018*. Our special thanks to them, the staff of Mission Australia and the many other organisations who supported their involvement.

### For further information about this report please contact:

#### Research and Evaluation, Mission Australia

 1800 88 88 68

 [youthsurvey@missionaustralia.com.au](mailto:youthsurvey@missionaustralia.com.au)

 [missionaustralia.com.au](http://missionaustralia.com.au)

 @MissionAust

 [facebook.com/MissionAust](https://facebook.com/MissionAust)

*This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without obtaining prior written permission from Mission Australia. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to Mission Australia: attention Legal Department, Level 7, 580 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000.*

**MISSION  
AUSTRALIA** | together  
we stand

## National Office

HSBC Building, Level 7  
580 George Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Tel: (02) 9219 2000

## State and Territory Offices

### Mission Australia NSW

HSBC Building, Level 7  
580 George Street  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Tel: (02) 9219 2000

### Mission Australia NT

Level 1, 6 Frances Drive  
Palmerston NT 0830  
Tel: (08) 8935 0900

### Mission Australia QLD

11 Cleveland Street  
Stones Corner QLD 4120  
Tel: (07) 3394 8100

### Mission Australia SA

Ground Floor, 212 Pirie Street  
Adelaide SA 5000  
Tel: (08) 8218 2801

### Mission Australia TAS

Suite 2, Level 1  
175 Collins Street  
Hobart TAS 7000  
Tel: (03) 6225 8200

### Mission Australia VIC

Level 27, 150 Lonsdale Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000  
Tel: (03) 8615 2200

### Mission Australia WA

17B Halley Road  
Balcatta WA 6021  
Tel: (08) 9225 0400