



Kids Helpline

annual client survey

Results: 2022-2023





Acknowledgement of Country

yourtown acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to the land and their waterways. We pay our respects to them, their culture, and their Elders; past, present, and emerging.

NEW BEGINNINGS

This art piece depicts the phrase "It takes a community to raise a child". It conveys the message that it takes many people to provide a safe and healthy environment for young people. **yourtown** is a place where our young people are given the security they need to develop and grow, and be able to realise their hopes and dreams.

Beck Field
Proud Kamilaroi Woman

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1. About this survey

The FY2022-23 Kids Helpline annual survey received 756 complete or almost complete responses. Of these respondents, 623 had experienced direct counselling support with 361 experiencing both direct counselling support and indirect support through digital resources on the Kids Helpline website, and 262 had experienced only direct counselling. Additionally, another 133 respondents only had experience with the website, bringing the total respondents making use of the website to 494 (361+133).

2. Participant demographics

Where demographic data were available, most respondents were female (223, 67.0%), aged 13-18 years (251, 71.7%), did not identify as First Nations, or culturally diverse, and were predominantly from New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland (82.9 to 84.1%). Detailed data are presented below:

- Gender:
 - Female (223, 67.0%)
 - Male (41, 12.3%)
 - Gender Diverse/non-binary/transgender (69, 2.7%)
- Age:
 - 5 to 12 years (73, 8.1%)
 - 13 to 18 years (251, 71.7%)
 - 19 to 25 years (23, 13.4%)
 - 26 years or older (3, 0.3%)
- Cultural background:
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD, 55, 16.8%)
 - First Nations people (24, 7.3%)
 - Neither CALD, nor First Nations (249, 75.9%)
- States and Territories:

○ NSW (220, 47.8%)	○ WA (23, 5.0%)
○ VIC (96, 20.9%)	○ ACT (13, 2.8%)
○ QLD (73, 15.9%)	○ TAS (8, 1.7%)
○ SA (26, 5.7%)	○ NT (1, 0.2%)

3. Kids Helpline direct counselling

3.1. Overall satisfaction

Respondents were asked two questions to gauge overall satisfaction with the service:

- How satisfied are you with Kids Helpline? (response scale between 0-10)
- Would you recommend Kids Helpline to a friend (Yes/No)

90 per cent of survey respondents who experienced counselling were satisfied with the service that they received, and 93 per cent would recommend Kids Helpline to a friend.¹

¹ Determined by respondent scores 5 or higher on a 0-10 scale.

3.2. Levels of therapeutic alliance between counsellor and client

Counselling impact research points to the therapeutic alliance between counsellor and client as a key element in supporting clients to make changes in their thinking and actions. Respondents were asked the following questions, providing a score between 1 (Not at all) and 5 (Completely): **“Last time you connected with a Kids Helpline counsellor (by phone, email or web chat)...”**

- Did you feel heard?
- Did you feel understood?
- Did you feel respected?
- To what extent did you and the counsellor talk about the things you wanted to talk about?
- Was the counsellor’s style of helping you a good fit?

Overall, survey respondents were generally satisfied (scoring 3 or above) across all domains. More than 90 per cent gave a positive response when asked whether they felt respected by their Kids Helpline counsellor (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table 1: Therapeutic alliance between counsellor and client

Level to which the Kids Helpline counsellor...	Total responses	Positive response ² (count)	Positive response ² (%)	Mean response value ³
...made you feel heard?	395	333	84.3%	3.8
...made you feel respected?	395	357	90.4%	4.2
...made you feel understood?	395	309	78.2%	3.6
...talked about the things you wanted?	395	324	82.0%	3.6
...was a good fit?	395	313	79.2%	3.6

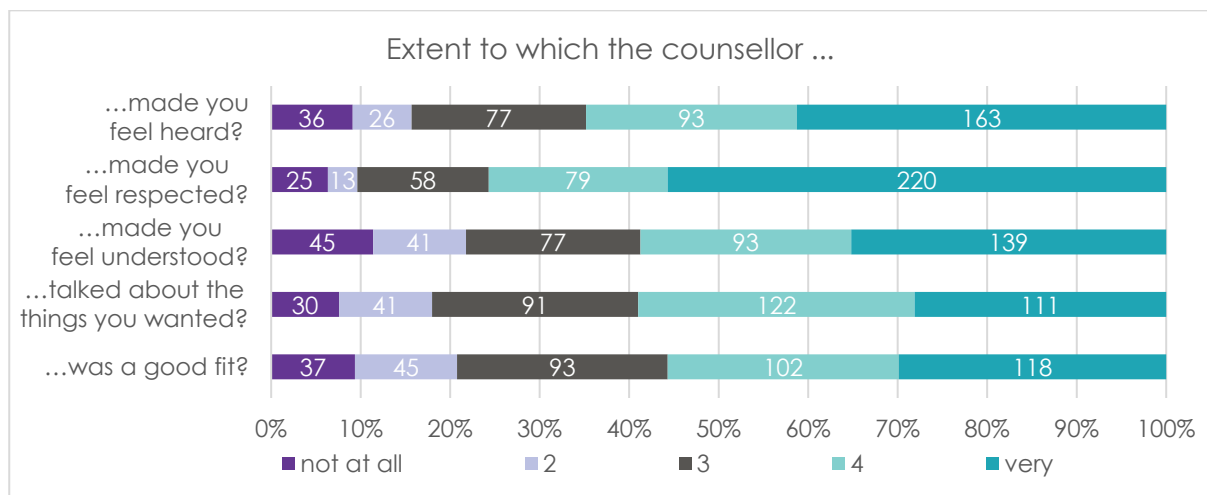


Figure 1: Therapeutic alliance between counsellor and client

3.3. Helping to relieve distress and anxiety

Kids Helpline direct counselling sessions had a positive impact on respondents’ levels of distress and/or anxiety. Respondents were asked two questions:

1. How often were you feeling upset or anxious when you first decided to contact a Kids Helpline counsellor?
2. How often have you felt upset or anxious since you last spoke to a counsellor?

² Positive response indicates that the respondent scored 3 or higher on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5.

³ Mean response value is calculated as the average score for all responses to the question (excludes N/A or missing).

Respondents were then asked to retrospectively score perceptions of their anxiety and/or distress for each time on a five-point scale (1 = “Never”, 2 = “A little of the time”, 3 = “Some of the time”, 4 = “Most of the time”, and 5 = “All of the time”).

Among the 432 respondents, 284 (65.7%) reported feeling upset or anxious “All” or “Most” of the time at the point of their first contact with a Kids Helpline counsellor. Almost half (44%) who reported any anxiety or depression on first contact⁴ reported a decrease in their distress and/or anxiety level following a counselling session with a Kids Helpline counsellor.

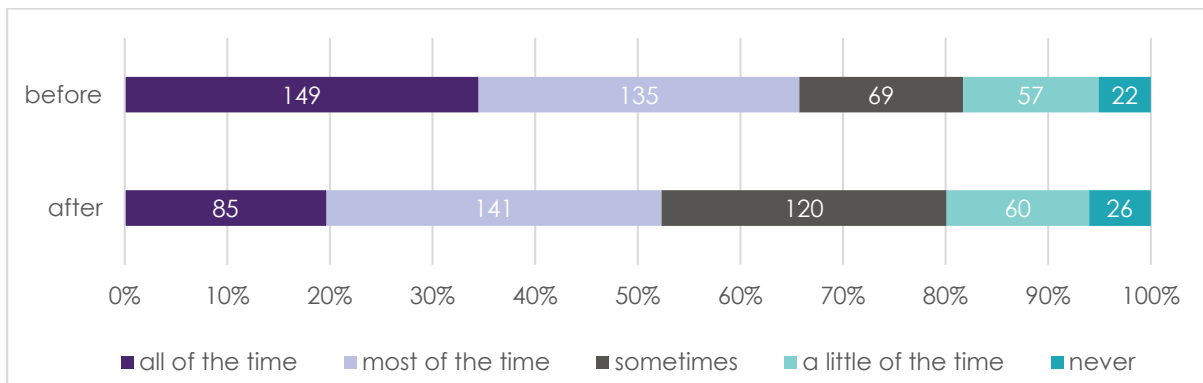


Figure 2: Self-reported respondent anxiety before and since Kids Helpline counselling sessions

Among those who reported any distress or anxiety at first contact with Kids Helpline:

- 182 (44.4%) of respondents reported a **decrease** in their distress and/or anxiety level following a counselling session with a Kids Helpline counsellor,
- 168 (41%) reported **no change**, and
- 60 (14.6%) indicated that their distress and/or anxiety level **increased**.

3.4. Impact on sense of well-being

The question “**What impact did the counselling you received from a Kids Helpline counsellor have on you?**” offered a following five-point response scale: 1 = “It made me feel a lot better”, 2 = “... a bit better”, 3 = “It had no effect”, 4 = “... a bit worse”, and 5 = “... a lot worse”. Most (76.3%) of the 430 respondents replied that counselling had made them feel either “a lot” or “a bit” better (Figure 3).

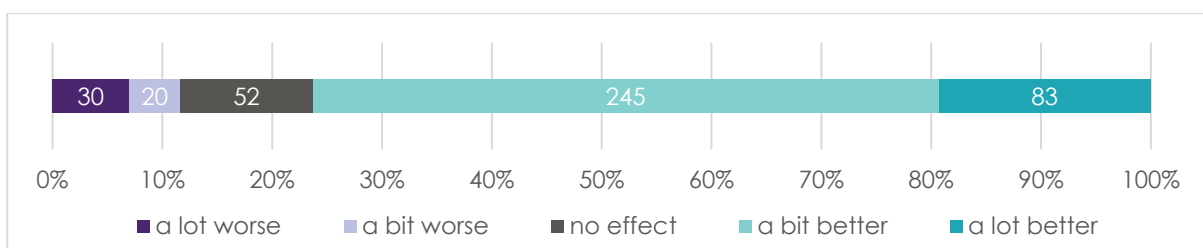


Figure 3: Impact of Kids Helpline counselling on wellbeing

Even among those who did not experience a reduction in frequency of feelings of distress and/or anxiety since their first counselling session, many reported feeling “a little” or “a lot” better following a Kids Helpline counselling session. For the 168 who indicated “No change” in distress or anxiety levels⁵, 120 (71%) indicated that they felt “a little” or “a lot better”. Even among the 60 who had indicated an increase in distress or anxiety levels since their first counselling session, 40 (67%) indicated that they felt “a little” or “a lot better”.

⁴ Excludes respondents who did not report any distress or anxiety at first contact.

⁵ Excludes respondents who did not report any distress or anxiety at first contact.

This suggests that although young people may continue to experience chronic feelings of anxiety or distress, counselling nevertheless may create positive impact on other aspects of their well-being, such as feeling understood, and increased awareness and knowledge about coping strategies.

3.5. Building capability and resourcefulness

The question “How helpful were the ideas/strategies that the counsellor suggested?” offered answer options: 1 = Not at all helpful and 5 = Very helpful. Of the 395 who provided an answer, 292 (73.9%) scored the helpfulness of ideas at three or higher. For the question: “After the last time you connected with a Kids Helpline counsellor, how confident did you feel about taking action for yourself, or someone you were helping?” the answer options ranged from 1 = Not at all confident to 5 = Very confident. Of the 395 respondents, 260 (65.8%) scored their confidence at three or higher (see Table 2 and Figure 4).

Table 2: Confidence and ideas from the last time client connected with counsellor

Last time you connected with a Kids Helpline counsellor...	Total responses	Positive response ⁶ (count)	Positive response ⁶ (%)	Mean response value ⁷
... helpful ideas/strategies	395	292	73.9%	3.3
... confident about taking action	395	260	65.8%	3.0

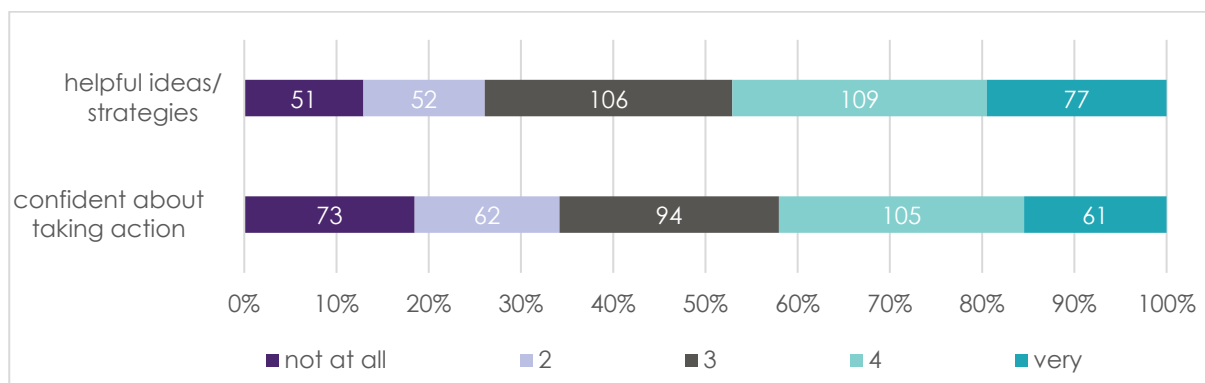


Figure 4: Confidence and ideas from the last time client connected with counsellor

3.6. Frequency of direct counselling contacts over time and how it was used

Most (61.9%) had used the Kids Helpline counselling services one to six times over the past 12 months:

- 268 (61.9%) contacted 1-6 times,
- 65 (15.0%) contacted 7-12 times,
- 69 (15.9%) contacted 13-50 times, and
- 31 (7.2%) contacted 50+ times.

Majority used the service for a one-off session (46.5% of the 415 respondents).

- 193 (46.5%) a one-off session now and then,
- 128 (30.8%) a few contacts in a short period whenever a particular issue comes up,
- 103 (24.8%) a long-term ongoing issue, and
- 105 (25.3%) in all three ways listed above.

Further reasons for using the service included use for crisis support, to help a friend, and to have someone to talk to including when other supports may not be available.

⁶ Positive response indicates that the respondent scored 3 or higher on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5.

⁷ Mean response value is calculated as the average score for all responses to the question (excludes N/A or missing).

4. Kids Helpline website activity

As an addition or alternative to direct counselling, many children and young people seek information and support through the Kids Helpline website which provides instantly accessible, tailored resources. Qualitative statements suggest that respondents easily find helpful information, reinforcing the benefit of a website to support Kids Helpline direct counselling activities.

Respondents who had accessed the Kids Helpline website over the past 12 months were presented with a series of Likert scale-type questions with answer options ranging from one to five.

Table 3: Kids Helpline website responses

	Total responses	Positive response ⁸ (count)	Positive response ⁸ (%)	Mean response value ⁹
... found new ideas/strategies	410	288	70.3%	3.1
... easy to find what they were looking for	411	306	74.5%	3.4
... the content was interesting	409	325	79.5%	3.4
... the content was useful	410	324	79.0%	3.4
... the content offered confidence to progress	289	190	65.7%	3.0
... motivated to take action based on the content	294	169	57.5%	2.8
... will use ideas/strategies you found	303	225	74.3%	3.5
... felt more hopeful that things can get better	308	194	63.0%	3.1

How often are you feeling upset or anxious when you go to the Kids Helpline website?

One in four of the 411 respondents (99, 24.1%) indicated that they were upset or anxious "all of the time" when going to the Kids Helpline website (Figure 5).

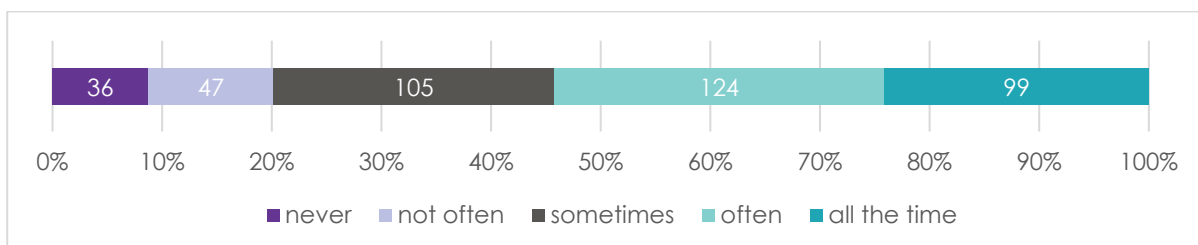


Figure 5: Kids Helpline website - How often are you feeling upset or anxious when you go to the Kids Helpline website?

How often does the Kids Helpline website help you find new ideas/strategies to help you (or others)?

Seven out of ten participants (288, 70.2%) provided a score of three or higher (Figure 6).

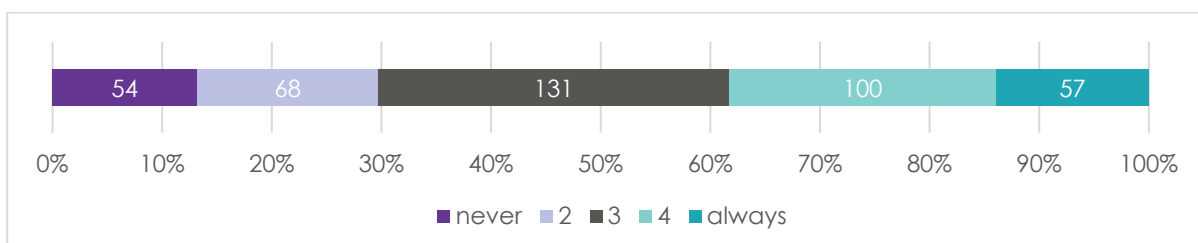


Figure 6: Kids Helpline website - How often does the Kids Helpline website help you find new ideas/strategies to help you (or others)?

⁸ Positive response indicates that the respondent scored 3 or higher on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 to 5.

⁹ Mean response value is calculated as the average score for all responses to the question (excludes N/A or missing).

Website utility

The following three questions aimed to measure the utility of the website. Respondents were asked whether the content was easy to find, interesting, and useful. The results were fairly consistent across the three questions (Figure 7).

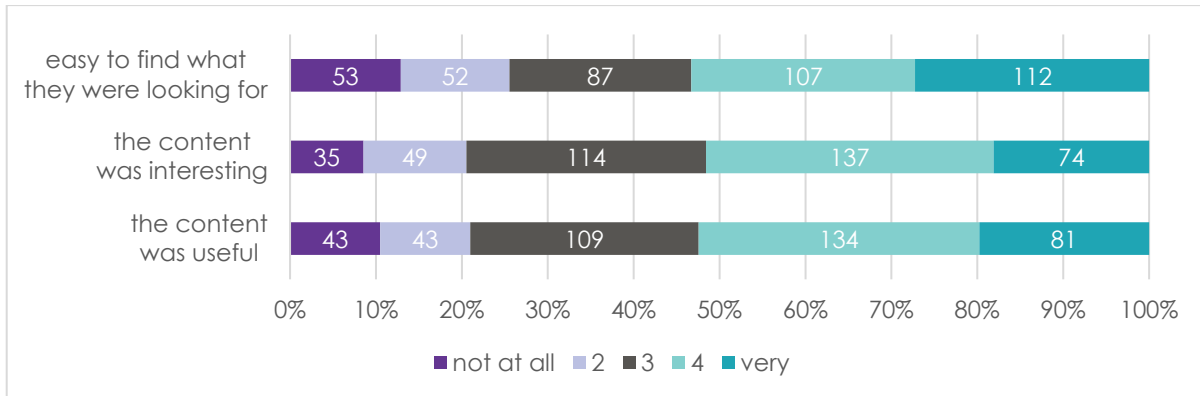


Figure 7: Kids Helpline website utility

Perceived effectiveness

Four further questions aimed to measure the perceived effectiveness of the website. Responses were measured on a Likert scale from one to five, with the option of also selecting 'N/A' for instances when the young person did not find content on the website that could help them. Thus, fewer useable responses were provided for these questions and 'N/A' responses have not been reported in the following figures (Figure 8, Figure 9, Figure 10, and Figure 11).

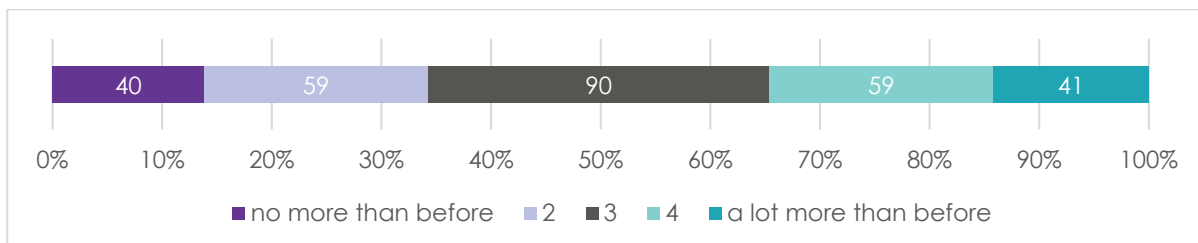


Figure 8: Kids Helpline website - To what extent did the content give you confidence to progress?

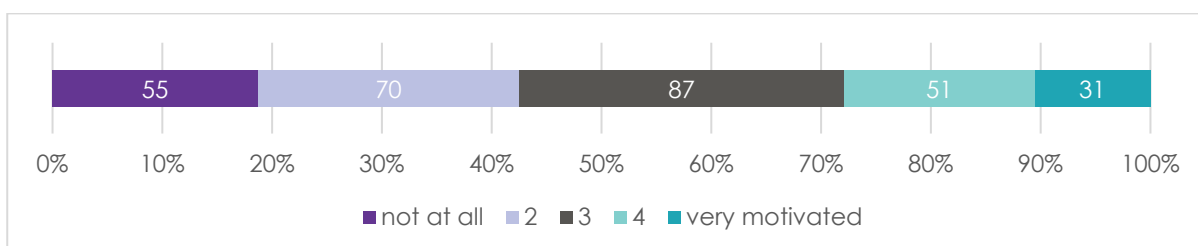


Figure 9: Kids Helpline website - How motivated were you to take action based on the content you found?

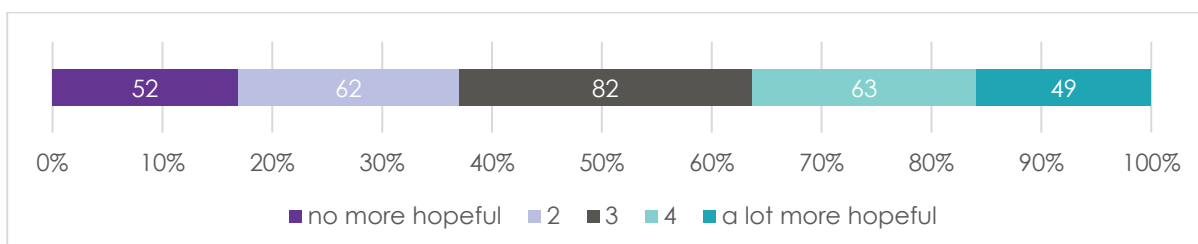


Figure 10: Kids Helpline website - How much more hopeful did you feel that things can get better, after viewing the content?

The question “How likely is it that you will use ideas/strategies you found?” offered an additional response option of “I/we already tried some out”.

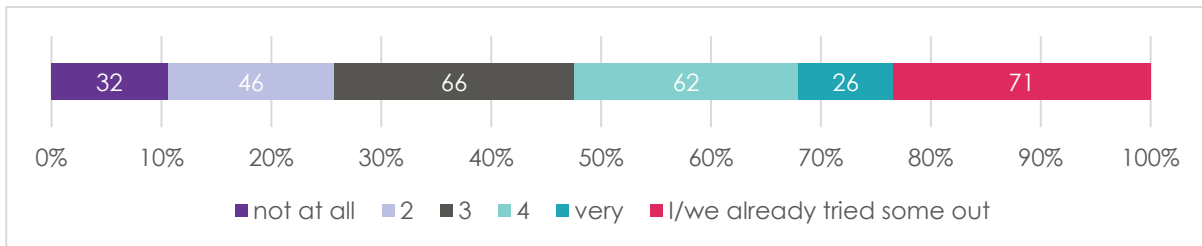


Figure 11: Kids Helpline website - How likely is it that you (or someone you are helping) will use some of the ideas/strategies you found?

4.1. Outcomes after accessing Kids Helpline website content

Respondents were also asked whether accessing the website resulted in them finding the help that they were seeking (“**After I accessed the content...**”) with the option to select one of four options listed below. Of the 314 who provided a response:

- 45 (14.3%) “...I did not need any more help”,
- 161 (51.3%) “...needed to know more and the content helped me with ideas for referrals or further resources”,
- 65 (20.7%) “...needed to know more but the content did NOT help me with ideas for further referrals or resources”, and
- 43 (13.7%) “...I did not find what I was looking for”

4.2. Kids Helpline website apps

The Kids Helpline website includes a number of apps listed in the ‘App library’. Respondents were asked: “**Have you seen the apps page on the Kids Helpline website?**”.

Of the 310 children and young people who provided a response to the question:

- 84 (27.1%) indicated “Yes – I’ve seen it and tried some of the apps you recommended”,
- 63 (20.3%) indicated “Yes – I’ve seen it but NOT tried any of the apps you recommended”,
- 24 (7.7%) indicated “Yes – I’ve seen it and referred some of the apps Kids Helpline recommends to other people”, and
- 165 (53.2%) indicated “No – I’ve not seen it yet”.

84 participants who had indicated that they had seen the apps and tried them were then asked “**Did you find any of the Kids Helpline recommended apps useful?**”. Of those, 83 replied with:

- 60 (72.3%) indicating that “Yes” they had found the apps useful,
- 18 (21.7%) indicating that “No” they had not found the apps useful, and
- 5 (6.0%) responding with “Other” and providing a written explanation.

“Other” responses included: “Most of them you need a phone which I don’t have and the websites you need to be over 18”; “Some were more helpful than others”; “I have downloaded some recommended apps but they don’t work” and “I found it useful cause me and my friend get along now”.

5. Qualitative results

At the end of the survey, children and young people were asked four qualitative open-ended questions about:

1. What do you like about Kids Helpline?
2. What ideas do you have for how Kids Helpline could help young people even more?
3. What ideas do you have for how Kids Helpline could use technology to better help your wellbeing?
4. Is there anything else you would like to share with us about your Kids Helpline experience?

Responses were analysed thematically, and the results are presented in the next four sections.

5.1. What do you like about Kids Helpline?

A total of 254 usable comments were provided. Respondent gender included 160 female, 45 gender diverse/non-binary/transgender, 26 male, and 23 unknown participants.

The following five major themes emerged from the thematic analysis:

5. Safe, supportive, and understanding environment
6. Accessibility
7. Counsellors
8. Helpful/beneficial
9. Useful resources/information available

5.1.1. Safe, supportive, and understanding environment

Overall, 135 children/young people stated that they valued the Kids Helpline service because they felt heard and listened to regardless of their concerns. This was the top theme across females, males, and gender-diverse respondents for this question.

Example young people comments for this theme included:

They listen and help you without judgement, when I contacted them about suicide and self-harming the counsellor didn't dismiss my feelings and make me feel invalid like a lot of people do. Female, 13-18 years, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, QLD

The ability to be anonymous and talk to somebody who won't judge me for who I am. Male, 13-18 years, CALD, WA

They provide a free experience to talk to someone about issues that can give an unbiased standpoint and advice to help you out. They listen, respect, and try to understand the situation you are in. Non-binary, 13-18 years, NSW

That you can talk about almost anything and unless you are in immediate danger no one needs to be contacted unlike talking with school counsellors or other online resources. Gender Diverse, 13-18 years, VIC

5.1.2. Accessibility

Secondly, the accessibility of the Kids Helpline service was also seen as an aspect that young people really liked (65 comments). This included the 24/7 nature of the telephone service, multiple contact options, such as phone, webchat, and email, the website design and resources available to all age groups, and that the service was free. Gender diverse/non-binary/transgender children/young people had accessibility as their second most liked aspect of Kids Helpline.

Example young people comments for this theme included:

I like the fact that KHL is 24/7 help when you need it. I also like the layout of the website because it's easy to navigate. Transgender, 13-18 years, CALD, QLD

Being able to talk to someone for free. Female, 13-18 years, NSW

I like how it is always there to help when I need it and how I can get support on a regular basis.
Male, 13-18 years, QLD

5.1.3. Counsellors

Thirdly, the counsellors were another aspect of Kids Helpline that children/young respondents valued overall (63 comments). Respondents mentioned that counsellors were nice, helpful, and understanding. Females were more likely to mention counsellors as an aspect of Kids Helpline that they liked, within their comments than the other genders.

Example comments from young people for this theme included:

The counsellor I spoke to was amazing and she was the best and really helped me. Female, 5-12 years, SA

The personal experience I get with a counsellor really helps me and makes me feel like I'm not alone. Male, 13-18 years, QLD

I've been contacting KHL for a while now and have grown quite close to my counsellor. They're kind, understanding, and willing to celebrate all my wins (no matter how small). Gender diverse, 13-18 years, NSW

5.1.4. Helpful/beneficial

Respondents also liked that the Kids Helpline service was helpful and beneficial to them. For instance, the service gave good advice, helped young people learn new coping strategies and/or helped reduce their distressing symptoms or issues (57 comments). Male respondents were more likely to mention this in their comments compared to female and gender-diverse/non-binary/transgender respondents.

Example comments from young people for this theme included:

But talking it out especially with my counsellor has helped me IMMENSELY, and beyond belief. I hardly ever feel upset now and all those issues I once had have dissolved, they don't upset me anymore. Male, 19-25 years, VIC

Kids helpline has encouraged me to become a better person and has given me hope to keep going and not give up. Male, 13-18 years, QLD

That someone cares about my problems, and they give me ideas on how to deal with them.
Transgender, 19-25 years, SA

5.1.5. Useful Resources/Information Available

The useful resources and information provided via the Kids Helpline website, Email, Webchat or My Circle was another aspect of the Kids Helpline service that young people really liked.

Example comments from young people for this theme included:

I love the apps and coping strategies provided. I use MyCircle, a platform developed by KHL, and I found it really helpful. Male, 13-18 years, NSW

Kids helpline is a great website to give ideas for people who want to help their peers or someone else in their life. Female, 5-12 years, VIC

The resources are great for explaining stuff about my brain to people. Non-binary, 13-18 years, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, NSW

5.2. How do you think Kids Helpline could help young people even more?

Overall, 225 comments were left by 145 female, 40 gender diverse/non-binary/transgender, 28 male, and 12 respondents of unknown gender.

Below are the five major themes from the thematic analysis of the question:

1. Shorter Wait Times
2. More information, resources, and content on website
3. Improve counselling practices
4. More technology options
5. More practical advice and tips

5.2.1. Shorter wait times

The top theme for this question was shorter wait times for telephone counselling and/or webchat (65 comments). For example:

I once had to wait over three hours before I gave up and left the webchat. Female, 13-18 years, VIC

The waiting times are highly discouraging, quicker contact is vital to trust in this helpline as well as times when people are in desperate need. Gender diverse, 13-18 years, CALD, NSW

I've tried to connect to webchat before at 10pm, and still didn't end up connected until 3am when I stopped it. Transgender, 13-18 years, QLD

Guys please I've been on the waiting screen for almost two hours. Gender diverse, 13-18 years, from CALD, WA

In addition, 33 participants suggested actions for reducing waiting times and/or how to help young people while they are waiting and removing the webchat queue cap during the night. These suggestions included:

- Changing the hold message to calming messages that help calm the person waiting, for e.g., breathing exercises.
- Have a queue number (i.e., like the one on Beyond blue)
- Make it possible to create an account so users don't need to put details in again and again every time they need a counsellor
- Add more staff on webchat at night shift as most young people are more vulnerable at night during 12-5 am

5.2.2. More information, resources, and content on website

Secondly, young people wanted more specialised and diverse resources, information, and content on the Kids Helpline webpage (31 comments). This included topics on:

- Coping strategies for different mental disorders
- OCD, Autism, and ADHD
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Include a section about Chronic Illness
- More young people personal stories to allow young people to know they aren't alone.
- Eating disorders, such as anorexia bulimia
- Kids Helpline making a quiz that gives you options of what Kids Helpline resources would be most beneficial to you as a young person.
- Calming activities
- Self-harm, addiction, safety planning, and feeling suicidal.
- Period advice for young girls
- Have sections more suited for older kids (i.e., layout and set up)
- More serious topics for young adults. Realities when young people aged 18-25 and even teens are experiencing more serious life issues
- More information about queer youth
- More information about young people with disabilities.

5.2.3. Improve counselling practices

The third theme was improving counselling practices (30 comments). Areas identified for improvement in counselling practices were:

- Listen more/ask less questions/understand young people's issues more (15 comments):

Some counsellors don't fully understand things and kinda push down how you feel. Making sure every counsellor helps everyone by not putting down how they are feeling and making sure that person can talk about what they wanna talk about. Female, 13-18 years, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, QLD

Stop asking lots and lots of questions when you reply. Gender diverse, 13-18 years, TAS

I feel my thoughts and emotions were disregarded and disrespected. I was told that my issue was for 18+ only. It's a kids helpline. I feel worse because of it. Both times that I utilized the services, they disregarded me and sent me away. Gender - unknown, 13-18 years, SA

- Less robotic programmed responses/better tone of voice (6 comments) and gender:

Emphasise a little on just simply showing personal voice and understanding. Female, 13-18 years, QLD

They need to loosen up a little, the counsellor seems almost programmed and robotic like talking to AI. Female, 13-18 years, NSW

I found that counsellors tend to use a certain emoji a lot during sessions, which seems more like something that is part of policy instead of them caring for you and trying to make you feel better. Gender diverse, 13-18 years, WA

- Provide Facetime counselling/talk in person (3 comments):

... Kids Helpline could maybe bring in Facetime counselling. R308, Female, 5-12 years, WA

Having face-to-face counselling. Female, 5-12 years, NSW

- Educate counsellors on particular topics, such as eating disorders, anxiety, and depression:

Be educated!! And especially eating disorders I came and spoke to a KHL counsellor today about my anorexia bulimia and they sounded like they knew nothing about anorexia and just kept on asking questions about stuff I said to them. So definitely be educated. Female, 13-18 years, NSW

- Make counselling more accessible for certain young people, such as expanding service to more social media platforms (i.e., Talk Life, Instagram); making My Circle more accessible with voice-over options, and discussing disabilities of young people more:

... KHL should expand their service and support via social media platforms like Instagram and Talk Life. ... also KHL should make the My Circle platform more accessible with voice-over ... should discuss more issues regarding disabilities. Gender unknown, 13-18 years, Unk

5.2.4. More technology options

The fourth theme for improvement of Kids Helpline was having more technology options (14 comments):

- Have more apps
- Be able to call using the website interface (instead of a phone)
- Have a texting service
- Voice messages on webchat
- Have a list of counsellors to choose from before connecting
- Expand service and support via social media platforms like Instagram and Talk Life

5.2.5. More practical advice and tips

Finally, the fifth theme included 13 comments:

(help children and young people more) by giving them more ideas and tips for what they could do without them feeling overwhelmed. Female, 5-12 years, QLD

Research suggests that young people frequently have unclear or mistaken concepts about what counselling entails, lack the self-confidence to develop their own strategies and become frustrated that counselling doesn't solve their problems immediately. This would suggest that counsellors and counselling marketing material should be clearer in creating appropriate expectations about what counselling involves (Dowling & Rickwood, 2015; Hawke, 2017).

5.3. How do you think Kids Helpline could make better use of technology?

There were 134 comments for this question. Respondents identified as female (84), gender diverse/non-binary/transgender (30), and male (14), with the remaining preferring not to say (6).

Responses clustered in six major themes:

1. Upgrade technology
2. Have online video counselling chats
3. Make queuing and counsellor information available
4. More interactive activities
5. More apps
6. Texting/SMS service

5.3.1. Upgrade technology

A major theme in the technology section related to upgrading the online systems such as Webchat, My Circle, and Kids Helpline website (16 comments). Most upgrade comments were about Webchat, such as having a faster system, fewer technical glitches, and a better mobile interface (11 comments):

Better interface with webchat on mobile phones. Female, 13-18 years, NSW

It is annoying to keep pressing the "do you want to keep waiting". Sometimes last minute, I don't click it, and I have to restart in the queue all over again. Either there needs to be a new system or display that message for longer. Male, 13-18 years, QLD

The chat feature would be better if it was possible to be used by more people. I rarely can get through and often get a message saying the queue is already full. Transgender, 19-25 years, VIC

My Circle and the Kids Helpline website were also mentioned for technology improvements, such as having a dark mode option, faster loading, and fewer glitches. For example:

Dark mode on my circle PLEASE! Female, 13-18 years, From CALD, QLD

On my circle, it says likes comments like post etc. Can you somehow make all the notifications to a post together? Female, 13-18 years, NSW

Components and sections of the website are either buggy or do not work. Consider adding a dark mode (if there isn't already). Many people connect late at night, so a dark theme is easier on the eyes and just overall nicer. Many young people prefer dark themes rather than light themes. Gender diverse, 13-18 years, WA

5.3.2. Have online video counselling/chats

Young people also wanted the option of having online video counselling or chats (11 comments):

The only thing I can think of is video calls. I'm totally uncomfortable showing my face, but I know some people find it helpful, mainly if they've been contacting the same counsellor for a while now. Gender diverse, 13-18 years, NSW

5.3.3. Make queuing and counsellor information available

More queuing and counsellor information before connecting to a counsellor (10 comments). Young people wanted to know where they were in the queue, how long they had to wait, and what current counsellors were available online in order to be able to choose their preferred/regular counsellor, or a counsellor of a particular gender:

Show more information about your place in the queue. Somehow know which counsellors are on if you want to speak to a specific one. Female, 13-18 years, NSW

Have an area on the KHL website where you can search the working hours of counsellors and see when a particular counsellor should be available would benefit those with a regular counsellor or those wanting to speak to someone specific. It would avoid people waiting in the queue for long periods to find out the counsellor they're after is unavailable. Female, 13-18 years, QLD

Having a place in the survey before a counselling session that you can tick to show whether you want to speak to a male or female counsellor. Female, 13-18 years, QLD

5.3.4. More interactive activities

Young people also wanted more interactive online activities, such as games or quizzes or online seminars and Q&As especially while waiting in the webchat queue:

Possibly web design with interactive activities to complete while waiting as a distraction (not just the Instagram quizzes). Female, 5-12 years, NSW

Yes, at least AI or something so people don't feel ignored or abandoned on those hold lines. Non-binary, 19-25 years, VIC

5.3.5. More apps

Other young people requested more apps for the service (8 comments):

Make an app for messaging like the webchat. Male, 13-18 years, WA

5.3.6. Texting/SMS service

Finally, some young people also suggested a texting/SMS counselling service (8 comments):

Give more methods to contact Kids Helpline. For example, SMS messaging? Male, 5-12 years, QLD

5.4. Is there anything else you want to share about your Kids Helpline experience with us?

Overall, young people provided 122 usable comments. Most respondents were female (83), male (16), and gender diverse/non-binary/transgender (16), with the remaining preferring not to say (5). The six themes for 'do you have anything else to add' were:

1. Great service/thank you
2. Counsellors
3. Service helped me
4. Wait times
5. Negative experiences with the service
6. Safe and Supportive environment.

5.4.1. Great service/thank you

Most young people commented on how great the Kids Helpline service was and how thankful they were for the service (46 comments):

Honestly, KHL is a great service, and of course, every service could probably be a little bit better, but they can never be perfect. So, I think KHL right now is pretty good. Some things can be changed but apart from that it is a really good service for young people. Female, 13-18 years, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, QLD

I absolutely LOVE KHL, and I would be happy to talk about them anytime to talk about my experience. Male, 13-18 years, NSW

You guys are amazing and deserve way more recognition for what you're doing. You got me off the brink many times and taught me how to start liking myself again. Thank you for everything you do!! Non-binary, 13-18 years, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, NSW

5.4.2. Counsellors

Counsellors were another common theme for this question (22 comments). 16 comments were about positive experiences with the counsellors (across all genders), and six were about negative experiences with the counsellors (female respondents only).

Positive experiences

The staff were always really nice and understanding. Male, 13-18 years, VIC

The counsellors are so nice and understanding, being patient with the people they're talking to and actually listening. Non-binary, 13-18 years, VIC

Negative experiences

Some are fantastic workers. Some don't let you actually share what your saying, just say I hear you, but then change the topic, and sometimes they already have their mind up about something. Female, 19-25 years, NSW

I feel safer and more comfortable talking to counsellors when they are relatable, kind of chill and laid back. It reminds me that I'm talking to a real person, not a computer or 'fake' person, which results in me getting more out of the session. Female, 13-18 years, QLD

5.4.3. The service helped me

Young people also shared how the Kids Helpline service helped them (17 comments).

I talk to KHL about 3 times a week, and they help me de-load my thoughts until my weekly CYMHS appointment. Female, 13-18 years, VIC

After I got past the waiting times, my anxiety I was feeling was gone both times I hopped off with the counsellors. Female, 13-18 years, SA

I was getting really badly bullied, and they sat there and helped brainstorm strategies for me. Male, 13-18 years, NSW

You got me off the brink many times and taught me how to start liking myself again. Non-Binary, 13-18 years, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, NSW

It helped me a lot when one of my friends committed suicide. Non-Binary, 13-18 years, NSW

5.4.4. Wait times

The long wait times to access counsellors was another area young people mentioned again in this section (14 comments). For example:

I have to wait hours trying to connect with a councillor, even in non-peak times. Female, 13-18 years, WA

5.4.5. Negative experiences with the service

Some young people shared negative experiences with the Kids Helpline service (11 comments). Example comments included:

I didn't want to tell you everything because I saw TikTok's about how you sent people to the hospital just because they opened up. Female, 13-18 years, QLD

It's no wonder kids are put off asking for help from services like this. I have never felt more misunderstood or disregarded. Female, 13-18 years, VIC

It took me a lot of courage to even reach out, and then nothing happened. I received a follow-up but did not respond. Male, 13-18 years, From CALD, NSW

One time a person ended session because they thought I was lying about my age. Male, 13-18 years, QLD

5.4.6. Safe and Supportive Environment

Finally, some young people felt the Kids Helpline service was a safe and supportive environment to open up about their situation (8 comments).

I love how everyone is understanding and thankful for sharing your situation, as that can be a load on someone's shoulders. Female, 13-18 years, QLD

But I knew I was safe, and I felt secure just talking to her and rambling my emotions out. KHL is an overall great experience and has a lot of fun games and interesting topics on their website. Male, 5-12 years, From CALD, QLD

6. In conclusion

yourtown and Kids Helpline would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all the children and young people who have taken the time to share their feedback and suggestions with us. Your insights are incredibly valuable and help us improve our services. While we know there's still a lot to do to meet demand and enhance our offerings, we're thrilled to see so many positive comments and high ratings for the 24/7 support our dedicated counsellors provide to kids and young people across Australia. If you'd like to support Kids Helpline, visit <https://kidshelpline.com.au/donate>. Your donation ensures that our counsellors can be there when children and young people so bravely reach out for help and support. \$5 provides 5 minutes of precious time for a child or young person to connect with a Kids Helpline counsellor. A lot can happen in 5 minutes. It could save a life.

7. References

Dowling, M., & Rickwood, D. (2015). A naturalistic study of the effects of synchronous online chat counselling on young people's psychological distress, life satisfaction and hope. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 15*(4), 274–283. <https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12037>

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thank you

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