

Introduction

What is Kids Helpline?

Kids Helpline has been operating for 26 years and is Australia's only 24/7 counselling and support service for children and young people aged between 5 and 25 years.

Tertiary qualified counsellors provide free, private and confidential support via telephone, web chat and email. Telephone and email counselling is offered 24/7 and web counselling is available from 8am to midnight (AEST) seven days a week.

The service operates a substantial website with a diverse range of resources for self-directed help-seeking by children, young people and adults. In addition, support from Optus enables Kids Helpline to deliver an early intervention and prevention program in primary schools called *Kids Helpline @ School* through their Digital Thumbprint Program.

Kids Helpline is a service of **yourtown** and is 72% funded by the community through **yourtown** Art Union ticket sales, donations and corporate support. The remaining 28% is funded through State and Commonwealth Government grants.

What this report is about and who is it for

This report is an appendix to *Kids Helpline Insights 2017: National Statistical Overview*. It provides summary data on Kids Helpline service demand and client concerns and characteristics for Victoria in relation to the 2017 calendar year. It will be of value to people working in social policy and research roles, journalists and others in the community who need to understand the current and changing help-seeking needs of children and young people in Australia today.

The *Kids Helpline Insights 2017: National Statistical Overview* and other related reports can be accessed at www.yourtown.com.au/insights/annual-overviews.

Notes on data collection, analysis and interpretation

Substantial missing data in relation to a number of data collection fields, most notably remoteness and cultural background, undermine the reliability of data presented in a number of tables and figures in this report. Please consult the Appendix of the National Statistical Overview for more detailed information on data collection, analysis and interpretation.

Where to get more information

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Service demand

Attempted and answered contacts

- In 2017, 87,420 of the 339,724 attempts made to contact Kids Helpline counselling service (or 26%) came from Victoria.
- Most of these attempts were made by phone (61,332) but also by web chat (22,397) and email (3,691).
- 42,300 of these attempts were answered by counsellors, corresponding to a response rate of 48%. This compares with a response rate of 46% across Australia.
- Note that when phone attempts are adjusted to exclude callers who dropped out before the 21 second mandatory wait message, the response rate for Victorian phone contacts in 2017 was 61%.

Trends over time

- From 2015 to 2017 there was an overall decrease of 3% in attempted contacts from Victoria across all media. Phone attempts decreased by 10% and email by 13%, while web chat attempts increased by 80%.
- Across all media, response rates for Victoria have decreased from 61% in 2014 to 48% in 2017.

Table 1. Victorian attempted and answered contacts – by medium and year of contact, with comparison to all states¹

Medium of contact	2015			2016			2017			% change in attempts 2015-2017
	Attempts	Answered	Response rate	Attempts	Answered	Response rate	Attempts	Answered	Response rate	
Phone										
Victoria	67,894	40,247	59%	65,232	32,820	50%	61,332	28,629	47%	-10%
All States	290,767	169,802	58%	276,960	135,719	49%	248,008	109,793	44%	-15%
Web chat										
Victoria	12,472	6,848	55%	19,555	9,392	48%	22,397	9,980	45%	80%
All States	43,464	24,115	55%	65,954	31,765	48%	79,054	35,201	45%	82%
Email										
Victoria	4,225	4,225	100%	4,087	4,087	100%	3,691	3,691	100%	-13%
All States	15,886 ²	15,886	100%	13,681 ³	13,681	100%	12,662 ⁴	12,662	100%	-92%
All media										
Victoria	84,591	51,320	61%	88,874	46,299	52%	87,420	42,300	48%	3%
All States	350,117	209,803	60%	356,595	181,165	51%	339,724	157,656	46%	-3%

1. The data presented in this table are sourced from KHL phone, web chat and email systems databases.

2. In addition to 15,886 emails received and responded to in 2015, 535 outreach emails were sent.

3. In addition to 13,681 emails received and responded to in 2016, 413 outreach emails were sent.

4. In addition to 12,662 emails received and responded to in 2017, 418 outreach emails were sent.

Who contacted the service

Demographic characteristics

- Kids Helpline counsellors recorded data in relation to 154,868 contacts from children and young people across Australia who were aged 5-25 years. State or territory information was available for 140,007 of these contacts, and of this subset 37,184 (or 27%) were known to be from Victoria.
- Table 2 shows the demographic characteristics of these contacts from Victoria and compares them with the characteristics of contacts from the rest of Australia where the contact's state or territory was known.
- As with contacts from the rest of Australia, more than seven out of 10 (73%) contacts from Victoria were female and just under half (48%) were aged 13-18 years.

- Compared with contacts from the rest of Australia, Victorian contacts were:
 - more likely to be aged over 18 years
 - more likely to be from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds and less likely to be from a Caucasian Australian background or an Aboriginal / Torres Strait Islander backgrounds
 - less likely to be living in in Outer Regional/Remote areas, and
 - slightly less likely to contact by phone and more likely to contact by web chat or email.

Table 2. Characteristics of Kids Helpline contacts 2017 aged 5-25 years – Victoria and rest of Australia¹

Contact characteristics	Victoria (N= 37,184)		Rest of Australia (N= 102,823)	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Female	19,281	73%	53,651	74%
Male	6,548	25%	17,728	24%
Intersex, Trans & Gender Diverse	612	2%	1,365	2%
Total	26,441	100%	72,744	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	<i>10,743</i>		<i>30,079</i>	
Age group				
5-12 years	2,891	12%	8,759	13%
13-18 years	11,737	48%	35,227	53%
19-25 years	9,643	40%	22,150	33%
Total	24,271	100%	66,136	100%
<i><26 but age unknown</i>	<i>12,913</i>		<i>36,687</i>	
Cultural background²				
Aboriginal &/or TSI	195	2%	955	4%
CALD	3,854	41%	9,324	34%
Neither ATSI nor CALD	5,301	57%	16,980	62%
Total	9,350	100%	27,259	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	<i>27,834</i>		<i>75,564</i>	
Remoteness³				
Major Cities	12,426	77%	31,542	71%
Inner Regional	3,021	19%	8,613	19%
Outer Regional/Remote	687	4%	4,411	10%
Total	16,134	100%	44,566	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	<i>21,050</i>		<i>58,257</i>	
Medium				
Phone	27,461	74%	78,549	76%
Web chat	8,384	23%	21,007	20%
Email	1,339	4%	3,267	3%
Total	37,184	100%	102,823	100%
Type of help-seeking				
Counselling contact	16,092	43%	41,812	41%
Information/Referral/Other contact	21,092	57%	61,011	59%
Total	37,184	100%	102,823	100%

1. Where column percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

2. TSI = Torres Strait Islander. CALD = Culturally and linguistically diverse. ATSI = Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

3. Remoteness classifications are adapted from the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. See *Kids Helpline Insights 2017: National Statistical Overview* for more information.

Types of help-seeking

The Kids Helpline counselling and support service responds to two broad categories of help-seeking: those children and young people seeking counsellor assistance for a particular concern or problem (*counselling contacts*), and those seeking information, referral to other services, or some other form of non-counselling support, like general conversation or playful engagement (*non-counselling contacts*, also called *information, referral and other contacts*).

As shown in Table 2, 43% of contacts from Victoria in 2017 were seeking counselling support while 57% were seeking information/referral or other forms of non-counselling support.

Demographic trends over time

Table 3 presents the characteristics of Victorian contacts over the last three years to consider whether there have been noteworthy variations in the client group over the short term. Key observations from the data in Table 3 include the following:

Table 3. Characteristics of Victorian Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by year¹

Contact characteristics	2015 (N = 46,711)		2016 (N = 41,221)		2017 (N = 37,184)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender²						
Female	22,289	73%	20,512	74%	19,281	73%
Male	8,102	26%	6,728	24%	6,548	25%
Intersex, Trans & Gender Diverse	253	1%	333	1%	612	2%
Total	30,644	100%	27,573	100%	26,441	100%
Unknown	16,067		13,648		10,743	
Age group						
5-12 years	2,386	9%	2,836	11%	2,891	12%
13-18 years	13,233	50%	12,557	51%	11,737	48%
19-25 years	10,778	41%	9,335	38%	9,643	40%
Total	26,397	100%	24,728	100%	24,271	100%
<26 but age unknown	20,314		16,493		12,913	
Cultural background³						
Aboriginal &/or TSI	365	3%	389	4%	195	2%
CALD	5,063	39%	4,429	41%	3,854	41%
Neither ATSI nor CALD	7,608	58%	5,871	55%	5,301	57%
Total	13,036	100%	10,689	100%	9,350	100%
Unknown	33,675		30,532		27,834	
Remoteness⁴						
Major Cities	12,528	74%	12,829	75%	12,426	77%
Inner Regional	3,798	22%	3,568	21%	3,021	19%
Outer Regional/Remote	607	4%	639	4%	687	4%
Total	16,933	100%	17,036	100%	16,134	100%
Unknown	29,778		24,185		21,050	
Medium						
Phone	38,846	83%	31,467	76%	27,461	74%
Web chat	6,029	13%	8,247	20%	8,384	23%
Email	1,836	4%	1,507	4%	1,339	4%
Total	46,711	100%	41,221	100%	37,184	100%
Type of help-seeking						
Counselling contact	16,979	36%	16,267	39%	16,092	43%
Information/Referral/Other contact	29,732	64%	24,954	61%	21,092	57%
Total	46,711	100%	41,221	100%	37,184	100%

1. Where column percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

2. A new gender category was introduced into Kids Helpline data collection from January 2015.

3. TSI = Torres Strait Islander. CALD = Culturally and linguistically diverse. ATSI = Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

4. Remoteness classifications are adapted from the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. See *Kids Helpline Insights 2017: National Statistical Overview* for more information.

- Over the last three years, there would appear to be:
 - a decrease in the proportion of Victorian contacts engaging by phone and an increase the proportion engaging by web chat,
 - a slight increase in the proportion of contacts from 5-12 year olds, and
 - an increase in the proportion seeking counselling support and a corresponding decrease in the proportion seeking non-counselling support.
- All other characteristics of Victorian contacts have remained consistent over the short-term.

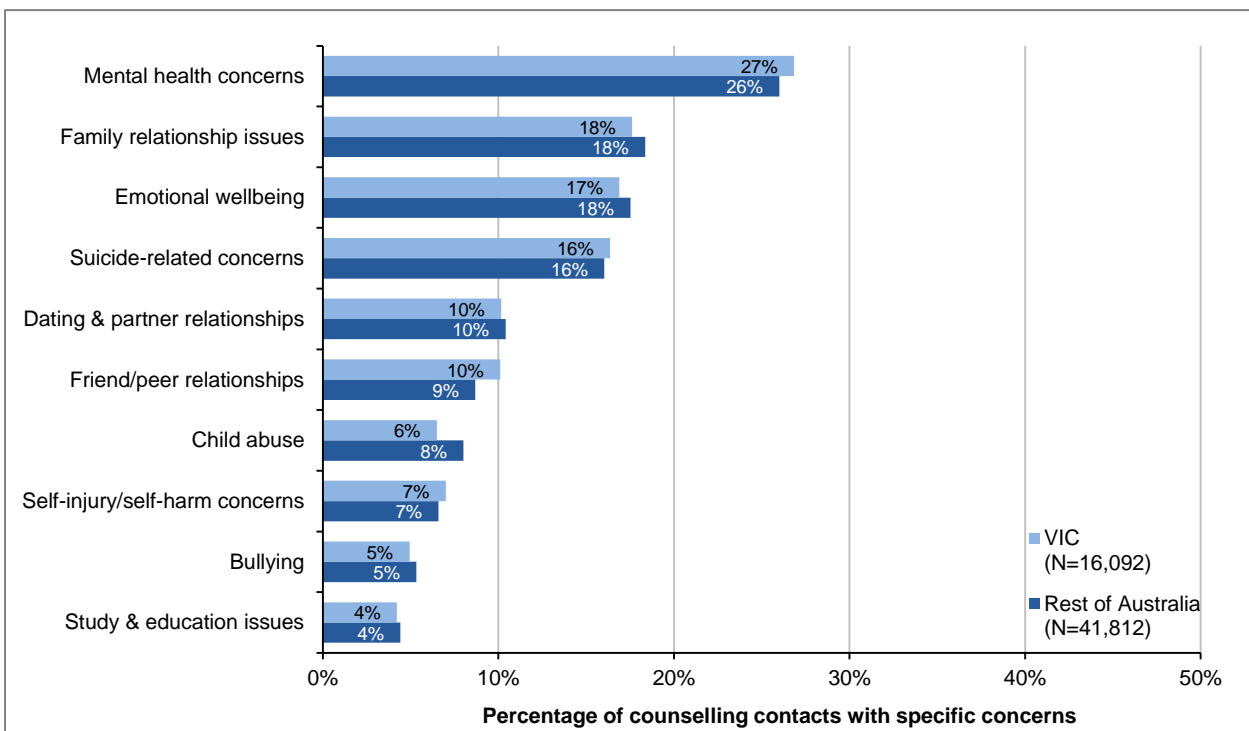
Most common concerns of children and young people who received counselling

During 2017, Kids Helpline counsellors responded to 66,386 contacts from children and young people who were seeking help about specific problems or concerns (i.e. counselling contacts). Analysis of the types of issues and concerns raised by children and young people in these sessions provide a valuable insight into the help-seeking concerns of young Australians today.

Victoria compared with rest of Australia

- State or territory information was available for 57,904 of these 66,386 counselling contacts and of this subset 16,092 (or 28%) were known to be from Victoria.
- Figure 1 shows the 10 most common concerns of Victoria counselling contacts in 2017 and compares this with the frequency with which these concerns were raised by counselling contacts from the rest of Australia where state or territory information was known.
- The key observation to be noted from the data is that the frequency with which children and young people in Victoria sought help from Kids Helpline for all of these issues is consistent with the frequency with which children and young people elsewhere in Australia sought help for these issues.

Figure 1. Most frequently recorded concerns of Kids Helpline counselling contacts 2017 aged 5-25 years – Victoria compared with the rest of Australia (sorted in descending frequency of Victorian concerns)¹



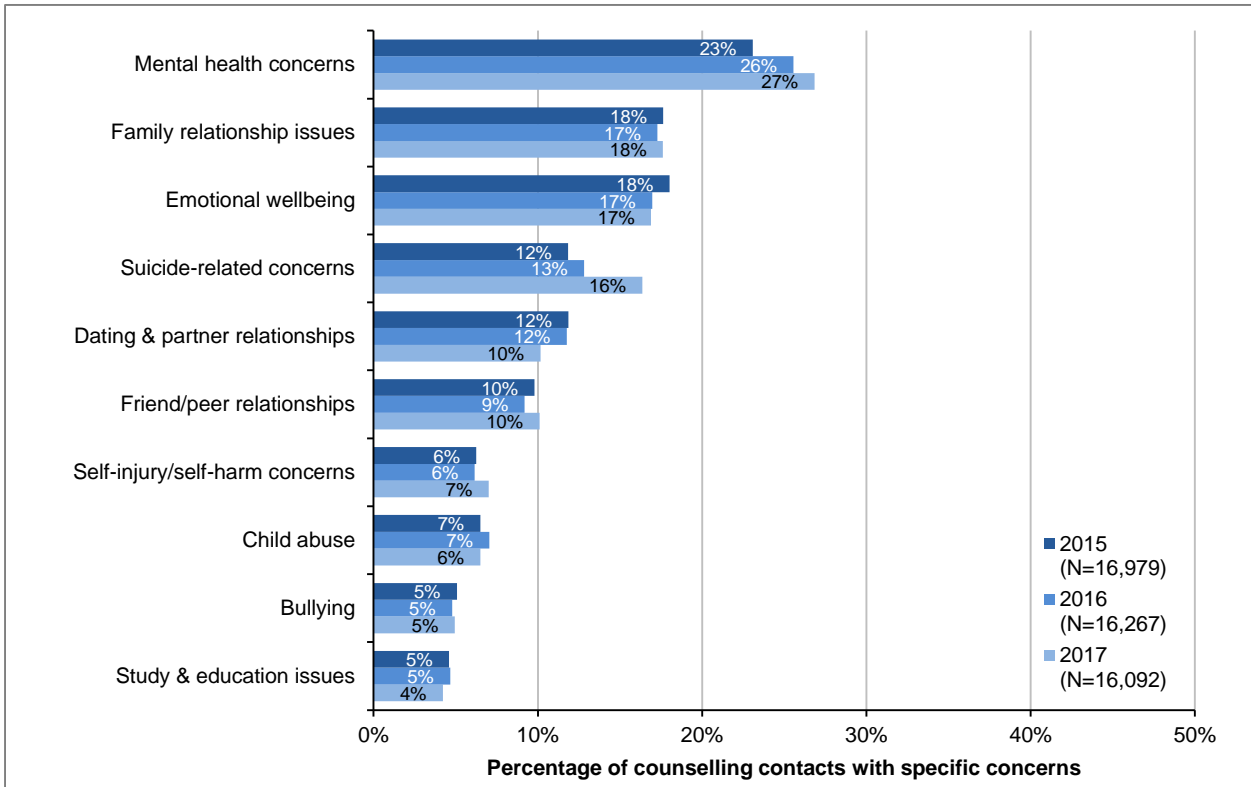
1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

Trends over time

Figure 2 shows the 10 most common concerns of Victoria counselling contacts in 2017 and compares this with the frequency with which these concerns were raised by Victoria contacts in 2015 and 2016.

- The key observation to be noted from the data is that the frequency with which children and young people in Victoria sought help from Kids Helpline for most of these issues has remained consistent over the short-term, and
- There appears to be an increase in the relative frequency of occurrence of mental-health-related contacts and in suicide-related contacts since 2015.

Figure 2. Most frequently recorded concerns of Victorian Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by year (sorted in descending frequency of 2017 concerns)¹



1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages may sum to more than 100%.

All concerns of children and young people who received counselling

Children and young people contact Kids Helpline about a very wide range of concerns, and focusing on the 10 most common concerns can obscure that diversity and the emergence of trends in other areas of less common client concern.

To address this issue, Table 4 reports the frequency with which *every concern* in the Kids Helpline’s concern classification system was raised by counselling contacts from Victoria in 2017 and compares this with the frequency with which the concern was raised in 2016 and 2017. Table 4 groups individual concerns under eleven ‘concern classes’ which aggregate frequencies across conceptual clusters of client concern.

The key observations to be noted from the data in Table 4 are that:

- the frequency with which children and young people in Victoria are contacting Kids Helpline about all these different concerns and classes of concern is quite consistent over the short-term, and
- there appears to be an increase over time in the relative frequency of suicide-related contacts.

Table 4. Number and proportion of Kids Helpline counselling contacts 5-25 years with particular concerns and classes of concern – Victoria by year¹

Concern and concern class	2015 (N = 16,979)		2016 (N = 16,267)		2017 (N = 16,092)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Mental health & emotional wellbeing	9,048	53.3%	8,865	54.5%	9,360	58.2%
Mental health concerns	3,920	23.1%	4,158	25.6%	4,320	26.8%
Emotional wellbeing	3,061	18.0%	2,759	17.0%	2,718	16.9%
Suicide-related concerns	2,012	11.8%	2,086	12.8%	2,633	16.4%
Self-injury/self-harm concerns	1,062	6.3%	1,001	6.2%	1,127	7.0%
Loss and grief	482	2.8%	423	2.6%	476	3.0%
Friends, peers, partners & dating	3,601	21.2%	3,318	20.4%	3,191	19.8%
Dating and partner relationships	2,013	11.9%	1,914	11.8%	1,635	10.2%
Friends/peer relationships	1,663	9.8%	1,496	9.2%	1,625	10.1%
Family relationships	2,995	17.6%	2,810	17.3%	2,835	17.6%
Child-parent relationships	2,140	12.6%	2,069	12.7%	2,127	13.2%
Other family relationships	650	3.8%	563	3.5%	561	3.5%
Changing family structures	358	2.1%	326	2.0%	306	1.9%
Parenting own children	38	0.2%	31	0.2%	26	.2%
Identity & self-concept	1,367	8.1%	1,234	7.6%	1,258	7.8%
Self-concept (global)	776	4.6%	610	3.7%	645	4.0%
Body image	192	1.1%	234	1.4%	249	1.5%
Sexual orientation	235	1.4%	215	1.3%	158	1.0%
Gender/sex identification	104	0.6%	141	0.9%	178	1.1%
Disability-related concerns	77	0.5%	46	0.3%	43	.3%
Cultural identity	41	0.2%	48	0.3%	49	.3%
Violence & abuse (non-family)	1,342	7.9%	1,233	7.6%	1,319	8.2%
Bullying - school related	712	4.2%	632	3.9%	640	4.0%
Bullying - other	159	0.9%	155	1.0%	161	1.0%
Sexual assault or abuse (non-family)	261	1.5%	240	1.5%	292	1.8%
Dating and partner violence	122	0.7%	115	0.7%	101	.6%
Harassment and assault (non-sexual)	71	0.4%	78	0.5%	85	.5%
Sexual harassment	40	0.2%	51	0.3%	66	.4%
Child abuse & family violence	1,105	6.5%	1,146	7.0%	1,045	6.5%
Physical abuse	538	3.2%	558	3.4%	497	3.1%
Sexual abuse	241	1.4%	226	1.4%	203	1.3%
Emotional abuse	291	1.7%	330	2.0%	316	2.0%
Neglect of child	36	0.2%	54	0.3%	62	.4%
Exploitation by family member	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Exposure to family violence	108	0.6%	116	0.7%	103	.6%
Living-in-care issues	49	0.3%	22	0.1%	43	.3%
School, education & work	1,023	6.0%	1,052	6.5%	962	6.0%
Study and education issues	779	4.6%	759	4.7%	679	4.2%
Employment issues	171	1.0%	203	1.2%	228	1.4%
School authority issues	84	0.5%	109	0.7%	71	.4%
Physical or sexual health & development	971	5.7%	865	5.3%	651	4.0%
Physical health concerns	482	2.8%	453	2.8%	374	2.3%
Pregnancy-related concerns	214	1.3%	173	1.1%	130	.8%
Sexual activity	228	1.3%	202	1.2%	138	.9%
Physical/sexual development	37	0.2%	28	0.2%	8	.0%
Contraception/safe sex	29	0.2%	34	0.2%	14	.1%
Homelessness & basic needs assistance	391	2.3%	387	2.4%	344	2.1%
Homelessness	201	1.2%	189	1.2%	174	1.1%
Practical/material assistance	142	0.8%	150	0.9%	114	.7%

Concern and concern class	2015 (N= 16,979)		2016 (N= 16,267)		2017 (N= 16,092)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Financial assistance/concerns	57	0.3%	54	0.3%	62	.4%
Substance use, addictions & risk-taking	386	2.3%	309	1.9%	287	1.8%
Drug use	249	1.5%	209	1.3%	167	1.0%
Alcohol use	111	0.7%	78	0.5%	86	.5%
Addictive behaviours (not drugs/alcohol)	28	0.2%	25	0.2%	38	.2%
Physical risk-taking	11	0.1%	4	0.0%	3	.0%
Gang/cult involvement	0	0.0%	4	0.0%	2	.0%
Offending, abusive or violent actions	151	0.9%	149	0.9%	172	1.1%
Illegal/offending behaviour	89	0.5%	55	0.3%	67	.4%
Abusive or violent actions	51	0.3%	84	0.5%	92	.6%
Sexual violence/offending actions	11	0.1%	12	0.1%	14	.1%

1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Totals provided for class of concern will be less than the sum of the individual concerns that make up that class due to the fact that multiple concerns within the class may have been identified in a single contact.