

Mental Health Summary

yourtown



Young people's Experience of Mental Health

In 2021 over 3,500 young people from around Australia engaged with **yourtown's** Your Voice Project. The project gave young people (aged 15-24) with the opportunity to voice their experiences, views on how services need to be improved and provide opportunities for them to inform policy.

3,500

Young People participated in Your Voice

1,519

participants have accessed mental health services.

77%

of participants said mental health was a key issue.

19%

of young people have experienced mental health stigma.

What young people told us about Mental Health:

People talk about a young mental health crisis, and while access to therapy is essential, it is not enough; we need reforms surrounding education, employment, and the environment.

Young people told us that they face significant issues which are impacting on their mental health. The experiences related to COVID-19, lockdowns and natural disasters has only amplified the issues that young people are experiencing related to:

- Schooling and the stress of assessment
- Access to further training and preparation for their future
- Lack of safety for diverse young people
- Experiences related to bullying
- Concern about the Cost of Living
- Youth unemployment and secure employment and
- Climate change

Mental health is an increasing problem in our society.

Honestly, my mental health is probably the worst it's been due to the constant stresses of assignments. Unfortunately, because of assignments, I don't have the time to seek for help.

It's not just one or two people affected, an entire generation is anxiety-ridden and depressed. What am I even working so hard towards in school? Who knows what the state of the world will be when I'm an adult?

Had my mental health worker laugh at my preferred pronouns and when I told him that I was questioning my gender, and wished I could be more androgynous.

I am afraid to admit to my psychiatrist that I am bisexual. I am afraid she will judge me and dismiss my sexuality.

Many young people are still reluctant to access mental health support. This can be because of a lack of knowledge, their location and concerns about stigma.

I have witnessed many others close to me struggle. The trouble seems to be that they don't want to reach out and don't want to admit there are problems until it escalates to a serious situation.

I believe many people like myself are hesitant to reach out under the fear of letting others know about it.

Teenagers, especially around my age (15), also often see mental health issues as a weakness, or think mental health services at school are something to be ashamed of using.

I have experienced a lot of negativity when trying to reach out for help. The school mental health system made it impossible for me to be honest without the threat of telling a parent and calling the ambulance.

READ THE FULL YOUR VOICE REPORT



Even when young people want to access support there are many obstacles that are in their way. Services are difficult to identify and access, they are expensive, there are long wait times and long term support is unavailable.

Young people will continue to die without a major change in the mental health system! I was on a waiting list for 4 months for an emergency admission to an adolescent mental health unit. I was discharged too early and ended up being sectioned a week later because I was going to kill myself. Something needs to be done. People are dying and nobody seems to be doing anything.

When accessing assistance for my mental health I wasn't listened to. No one did anything until I over dosed or self-harmed. My experiences have always been that I don't matter until I become an issue to others. It's as if death is looked at as an inconvenience and my mental health issues were swept under the rug.

Accessing public mental health services is difficult and at times impossible when you live somewhere that does not have community mental health services or bulk billing psychiatrists. You should not need to be on the edge of killing yourself in order to be taken seriously and for the service to give you an appointment.

Going through the public mental health system is hard and exhausting. Services like headspace, which is the only way I can access free psychiatry and counselling, are extremely overworked and underfunded.

It is hard to find low cost or free services which are able to do long term work with complex mental health. I can't afford to pay \$100+ a week for a years to help me function better. Community mental health is good, but can be largely inaccessible for people who are not "high risk" enough. It can make it feel like you have to choose between living with it as is or getting bad enough to meet the criteria that might get you help.

Figuring out the Mental Health system is really hard. I went to my GP and was provided with a Mental Health Plan. Even with the medicare rebate, all the psychologists I found were too expensive (they all had at least a \$100 out of pocket expense). Psychologists that bulk billed often had really long wait times.

I feel I suffer from mental health issues but haven't accessed any services because I don't know what is available to me in my area. I live in a rural area so the services that are available are very limited and are poorly advertised.

Education about mental health and wellbeing is needed for young people to help them develop strategies to manage their wellbeing and support help seeking behaviour.

Mental health literacy needs to be a staple in the school curriculum. Teaching kids about how their brain works, the roles of emotions, dealing with conflict, setting boundaries, self-regulation strategies, coping with stress, coping with grief (and so much more!). These aren't mental health issues that only affect some people, having good mental health is something that we should be teaching across the board. It destigmatises seeking help for services, increases peer support and has the potential to involve parents in the process.

Young people, especially boys and men, should be encouraged to seek help instead of being shamed by others. Education programs should teach children about mental healthcare options and encourage children to ask for help when needed.

You can't just throw money at mental health causes to make them better. You should focus on what the real problems are in society that are causing people to be so depressed e.g. finances, being in lockdown, and focus on trying to fix those. Mental health will improve with a stable society and real life advice mixed in with education to teach kids that its not all about money and cramming and stress. Also fix the education system because putting stress and pressure on students just makes everything worse.

Mental health is a massive problem. So many suffer in silence and lose their battle with a voice in their head. Guys feel like they will be less masculine if they were to reach out for help.

Cost of Living Summary


yourtown



Young people's Experience of Cost of Living

In 2021 over 3,500 young people from around Australia engaged with **yourtown's** Your Voice Project. The project gave young people (aged 15-24) with the opportunity to voice their experiences, views on how services need to be improved and provide opportunities for them to inform policy.

3,500

Young People participated
in Your Voice

66%

of participants said cost of
living was an issue

41%

of participants said income
support was an issue

44%

of participants said
housing was an issue

What young people told us about the Cost of Living:

...it's been a constant struggle to afford rent, bills, money for public transportation, food, medications and appointments that I have to pay out right for...After everything, I'm usually left with \$50 a fortnight.

Young people told us they are struggling to afford daily expenses such as housing, food, clothing, transport, sanitary items and healthcare. Lack of affordable housing leads to couch surfing, rough sleeping and unsafe housing situations.

I'm only left with \$10 after I pay all my bills, so I've got to try and work that out for a whole fortnight.

I could barely afford rent, utilities, petrol, food, etc while working and receiving income support.

...I am often left debating whether to eat and buy my medication or pay rent.

I can't afford to pay rent, buy food or pay for transport. I have to keep asking people for money. If I didn't have those people in my life, I'd already be homeless...This is all very stressful.

I suffered judgement and I was turned away. "You don't look homeless", "how can you be homeless?" People need to realise ... homelessness doesn't have a look.

Young people need money to live, study and find work without being exposed to unsafe housing conditions. Please help us get the money and housing opportunities.

We need to be safe as we learn and grow.

I am not being paid enough to live on by Centrelink and I am genuinely scared for what will happen now that the COVID-19 supplement has been cut off.

READ THE FULL YOUR VOICE REPORT



Cost of living pressures negatively impact young people's immediate and long term wellbeing. Low payment levels are limiting access to affordable health care, including mental health support, and the ability to work and study.

Accessing support can be difficult due to long wait times, confusing processes and strict eligibility criteria, creating more financial pressure.

Youth Allowance and the Poverty Line



...the standard rate of job seeker income is a really tight fit and doesn't allow for any excess to be put towards private health services (psychologists, psychiatrists, medications not covered by Medicare, gym memberships etc.)

If Centrelink upped the payment it would allow people to actually get help they need and then get a job.

I had to practically beg for financial assistance from Centrelink to pay rent because I can't get a job, due to my busy study schedule, mental health and Asperger's.

I'm a university student who relies on Youth Allowance as well as two casual jobs to support myself. My studies, which are crucial to my future career, suffer because of my workload. This is on top of my volunteer work, another crucial experience needed to get a job once I've finished my degree. So many of my peers are in this same position, and many cannot rely on financial support from their families. If the government wants graduates who are knowledgeable, fully qualified, and brilliant individuals, greater financial support is necessary.

I can't afford to pay \$100+ a week for years to help me function better.

... the claim is taking over a month to process. This means that until it is processed, I have very little source of income.

Currently awaiting my youth allowance claim to be processed. Despite living interstate from my family for 2 years, I have not had enough work to qualify as an independent. This means that finishing my claim hinged on my parents filling in their income details, which left me powerless to fix my income problems until they did so. What if I didn't speak to my parents?

Young people told us that they need more financial support to help them manage their health and mental health, improve their skills and allow them to enter the workforce.

Centrelink youth allowance barely provides enough money for an individual to live off. If I want to pay my rent (a fortnight of youth allowance plus COVID-19 Supplement doesn't cover a fortnight of rent) then I must consider going without food and without medication, before even thinking about covering bills.

The only time I have ever felt financially stable and able to access the supports I needed in the community was when Centrelink payments were briefly doubled. I wish we had that level of financial support on an ongoing basis.

Helping young people through their final years of education, when they are newly independent from their parents, is an important investment in the country's future. Many parents (mine included) don't have the means to financially support their children who need to move away from home for education and to leave these people behind because of this factor is unfair and ensuring less privileged, yet still brilliant, minds are not able to reach their full potential. This could be through either not being able to access further education at all or not being able to make the most of this education due to other stressors. Allowing young people to get on top of and learn healthy coping mechanisms for their mental health, have good quality yet affordable housing and adequate (I.e. ABOVE the poverty line) income for these young adults will allow them to put their all into their studies and become valuable employees in the future.

Education Summary

yourtown

Your Voice

Young people's Experience of Education

In 2021 over 3,500 young people from around Australia engaged with **yourtown's** Your Voice Project. The project gave young people (aged 15-24) with the opportunity to voice their experiences, views on how services need to be improved and provide opportunities for them to inform policy.

3,500

Young People participated in Your Voice

67%

of participants said education was an issue

73%

of 15-17 year old's said education was an issue

65%

of participants said lack of support, including for mental health, in the education system was a key issue.

14%

of participants said they left school due to a lack of support.

What young people told us about Education:

My main problem with the Australian education system is a lack of support services.

Young people told us that the current education system did little to prepare them with the skills they need to successfully transition into adulthood or further employment and education.

We need to be interacting with the world, learning about all the world has to offer when we're in our final years of school, not ignoring everything in our lives, other than the exam papers, because we believe that this is the only way that we'll ever succeed. No matter what, we will always feel pressure when we're at this stage in our lives, as we try to figure out our life plan, we don't need the HSC to add completely unnecessary pressure that overshadows the pressure that is already there, and will actually help us figure our lives out. The system needs to change.

Make the content learnt in skills more applicable to the workforce and more focused on life schools e.g., cooking, fabric work, critical thinking, wood/metal working, knowing how to deal with difficult issues, such as grief, or addiction to alcohol, substances or pornography etc.

This is a crucial time in our lives where we should be interacting with the world, seeing what it has to offer and developing our soft skills, so when we do go out into the real world when school is finally finished, we don't feel like we're being thrown completely into the unknown and entirely unable to handle life's real challenges.

I believe that the school education system needs to prepare students for practical skills that they will need into adulthood. It would be helpful to have classes about taxes, how to save money efficiently etc. More help about how to get internships or experience in our chosen fields would be beneficial.

The education system is built on this principle that is very traditional and doesn't prepare students to gain real world skills straight out of high school. Instead, they sit the HSC exam to receive an ATAR, which highlights that university is the main pathway that all students should take.

After school I wanted a job, but I had no experience. I didn't want to study because high school was enough.

READ THE FULL YOUR VOICE REPORT





Young people told us that the education system did not support their individual circumstances, or create an environment that would allow them to be successful.

The current school system does not support neurodivergent or disabled people.

General population can be very patronising as to why a young person is not in school or training or working. Older generations don't understand that young people live in such a complex time, and it's hard to do all of the above.

I'm a university student who relies on Youth Allowance as well as two casual jobs to support myself. My studies, which are crucial to my future career, suffer because of my workload. This is on top of my volunteer work, another crucial experience needed to get a job once I've finished my degree. So many of my peers are in this same position and many cannot rely on financial support from their families. If the government wants graduates who are knowledgeable, fully qualified, and brilliant individuals, greater financial support is necessary.

An ideal system would be one where no one is discriminated against. One where young people can access help with homework/schoolwork and mental health. It is a system that is able to reach everyone no matter their race, financial situation, or where they live.

I deferred it after 3 weeks, as I realised I was completely unprepared for the real world and just want to spend the year relaxed and recovering from all the mental health problems I still have that were created throughout the HSC.

Young people told us that their mental health suffered in the education system.

Reduce the immense pressure placed on students to perform well, especially in year 11 and year 12 (that is an important step in improving youth mental health; tackle the source, not the effects).

Schools are very hard on students, most people I know are suicidal because of how hard it is on us. Schools shouldn't make people want to commit suicide.

Our education system needs to be reformed. Kids and teenagers are not the same and therefore, not everyone is fit for the same education system. From my experience, completing mass amounts of homework and repetition is inefficient. Subjects should be surrounding the child's passion and interests, and that would help them engage and assist their future.

School students need more time to be kids, we are overloaded with work which I understand is necessary, but kids barely have enough time to do this work, we do 7 hours of school plus more hours worth of homework a night, we are encouraged to play sports and get enough sleep each night but no one takes into account kids that have jobs to support themselves, or their families, or when kids are supposed to have a social life because we can't with the amount of work we are given. I know there isn't much that can be done to change this but honestly think about us kids for once because it's hard being a kid with so much pressure to succeed placed on you and not enough time or support to succeed in the first place.

Further, young people told us that there is a lack of support services available to them in the education system, particularly for their mental health.

I feel like mental health resources are something that can be easily accessed online, but is also a topic that isn't spoken about enough verbally. I think mental health should be a topic in our local schools and high schools to educate and spread awareness.

Honestly, I feel like it's hard to find help with mental health. School guidance counsellors are there, sure, but at the same time they tell your parents everything and I just wish everything was confidential.

At first my school wasn't accepting of my health issues, and basically told me I had to leave, which made me feel quite excluded and useless.

I believe that the biggest change that needs to occur in the education system is a more accessible and friendly mental health system. We as students are constantly told to talk to someone if we need to, but are denied the right to have a comfortable space to share our concerns and problems in. Mental health is one of the biggest reasons why student's don't do well in school, and I strongly believe that with an improved system, it would help students across Australia to better their grades and education experience in general.

Not being able to attend school due to mental health issues is really exhausting. The support from schools themselves is very poor.

Incorporation of support services for disabilities and mental health in all schools (especially public/government-run schools). Early intervention in primary schools and intervention programs in high schools to address and improve upon student mental wellbeing and learning difficulties, along with other disabilities (physical and psychological).

The Aboriginal student support at my university was very helpful and helped me find out about relevant services.

Employment Summary



Young people's Experience of Employment

In 2021 over 3,500 young people from around Australia engaged with **yourtown's** Your Voice Project. The project gave young people (aged 15-24) with the opportunity to voice their experiences, views on how services need to be improved and provide opportunities for them to inform policy.

3,500

Young People
participated in Your
Voice

54%

of participants said
employment was an issue.

62.5%

of 18-24 year old
participants said
employment was an issue.

73%

of First Nations
participants said
employment was an issue.

What young people told us about Employment:

The issue around employment is that young people apply for jobs but are put off because they don't have experience in that field. How are young people meant to gain experience in the workplace if no one is giving them a chance?

Young people told us that their education is not giving them the skills or experience required to enter the workforce.

As someone who has applied for over 70 jobs and not received a single interview, despite a grade 12 education, the system is terrible.

I would love to see more companies willing to offer entry level roles with the intention of training people up instead of expecting them to know everything from the get-go. This would also allow opportunities for people who can't attend uni or tafe.

Employers are expecting so much of candidates which makes it really difficult to get an entry level job out of uni. I've seen advertised positions for entry level roles asking for 3+ years' experience where the job description is 3 separate roles in one.

I did a marketing postgraduate qualification, but I am still not eligible for a lot of advertised jobs because I don't also know graphic design along with marketing. That would be another qualification I'd have to obtain while trying to support myself financially.

Please give more educational opportunities to young people to increase employment opportunities and income in the future.

Nowhere wants to give you a job, no matter how hard I work for it. Even if you have qualifications.

There is no incentive for companies to hire someone who is fresh out of uni. From my experience, they want people who already know what they're doing so they don't have to spend time/money on training them - which leaves young people at a disadvantage. The government has brought in initiatives, such as Job Maker and Job Trainer, but it needs to be looked at on a wider scale and not just for trades.

Employment, especially for young adults or teens, needs to be better accessible and available. This comes down to university and levels of education beginning to not be as valuable to employers anymore. It seems that experience is more valuable and so people who spend years at university or further education may not be guaranteed a good paying job anymore. Is going to university worth it anymore?

READ THE FULL YOUR VOICE REPORT



Young people told us that there is limited support and opportunities to find secure employment.

We are underemployed and unemployed. Our fiscal security is non-existent, and we are terrified for our futures. The gap between rich and poor countries continues to grow, and women still get paid less than men - less again if they are women of colour.

Even after 13 volunteer positions and 5 internships while I was studying my bachelor's degree, I never managed to get a job in my field. I then had to go on to postgrad study to eventually get a job.

I have thankfully finally found a job but for the 5 years I was looking, it was extremely stressful, demeaning, and dehumanising, and honestly, resulted in intense depression for myself. People don't realise how mentally painful it can be to be unemployed. I felt like I wasn't valued in society, and that I didn't deserve to be alive, or like I was a burden.

Young people from diverse groups told us they face extra barriers in accessing employment opportunities and being accepted in their workplaces.

I've accessed various disability employment services, and a mental health services. I feel a lot of them don't understand much and some really just don't care.

I have been in youth job seeker programs before, and while I was lucky and had a case manager who was focused on wellbeing as well as assisting me to get back in the workforce, he was unable to keep this focus with the pressure from higher ups to get kids into work with no regard for wellbeing.

I have found it difficult to find a job and along with my mental health, it's much more difficult for me to put myself out there.

I had an awful experience with a disability employment service who kept trying to push me into full-time work and calling me lazy when I said I couldn't. I dreaded going in and cried after (and even during) many of my meetings. They didn't tell me that I needed to update Centrelink once I'd got an autism diagnosis, and generally didn't seem to think it was relevant.

Too few jobs. Too many unemployed.



There were no services to help me at this time. I felt confused, stressed and alone.

Trying and failing multiple times to keep jobs was something that embarrassed me and something I beat myself up about so much. Trying to speak to professionals about this was difficult for them to understand as they were older than me and just reinforced my negative thoughts and feelings about my failures instead of giving advice or support.

The youth, we need help. Many of us feel like we have been thrown in the deep end, we finish school and boom you need to find a job, you need to have better support and more education about what we are signing up to help the youth, not put them in a program that basically makes them feel like they are back to school because they haven't been able to find a job. No one helps us, we are expected to do what we are doing and to report when we are done, and what we have done. I was pregnant and forced to look for work. No one wanted to hire a pregnant 21-year-old homeless woman. No one wanted to help a 21-year-old pregnant woman. No one has ever wanted to help me become a successful photographer. I am expected to study and/or work and look after a child, just to be able to afford to live.

Environment Summary



Young people's Experience of the Environment:

In 2021 over 3,500 young people from around Australia engaged with **yourtown's** Your Voice Project. The project gave young people (aged 15-24) with the opportunity to voice their experiences, views on how services need to be improved and provide opportunities for them to inform policy.

3,500

Young People
participated in Your
Voice

46%

of participants said the
environment was an issue.

14%

of participants had ideas
about policy changes
involving the environment.

23%

of participants said both
mental health and the
environment were issues.

What young people told us about the Environment:

I would first like them to look at what is happening with our environment and the science behind climate change. I would like them to know that all of this, bushfires, floods, extreme heat etc. is only going to get worse. It's their children, grandchildren, and so on that will be affected to a point that we will be unable to live anymore because there will be so much insecurity in the world.

Young people told us that they are concerned about climate change and its impact on their lives, now and into the future.

We urgently need to make changes to save the planet from global warming, pollution and saving animals that are slowly going extinct from human causes.

We need to start acting on it. We are currently killing our planet and future. The cost is high to turn green, but the cost of not doing something is higher.

We need to act faster against climate change. Us young people are the ones who will have to deal with everyone's mistakes. We need to ban single use plastics, such as plastic bags and straws, so we stop polluting the oceans.

You can't separate the mental health of young people from our social and environmental contexts. We grew up knowing that our world is dying and no amount of counselling will stop the anxiety and depression that this causes.

A main excuse for the lack of change that I often hear in the media from the government is the negative economic impact that will come as a result of closing down industries such as mining. However, when you consider the long-term economic impact that will be caused by remaining how we are currently, it is much more destructive to people's careers. By keeping coal mines in business now, a lot of people will remain employed, however, in the long-term, the damage this does to our environment, and therefore the tourism industry (which is a far greater industry) will be far more destructive. Australia has the resources, science and land to make a positive impact in relation to the environment, yet we appear to be lagging behind the rest of the world.

READ THE FULL YOUR VOICE REPORT



I'd like to tell them that yes, they're doing some, but some is not enough. We're a generation who is not looking forward to the fact that the problems in our current world are going to be 10 times worse by the time they're up to us to deal with, that's why we're trying to take action now. Mental health is on the decline and we've been growing tired for years, and I know so many people who panic over climate change, and the fear of what the world is, and the fact that not enough is being done and stuff that has been done, it's gonna be done too late and it worries us.

Young people told us of a sense of hopelessness and helplessness when talking about action, or lack of action, on climate change from the Government.



Climate change needs to be addressed immediately and cannot wait any longer. It is rarely addressed and is often skimmed over.

Basically, we shouldn't have to protect and fight against you (Federal Parliament and/or members) for our voices to be heard about protecting our environment and saving our planet. Most people in parliament are old and don't care about climate change, however, this is our future, we don't want to die, or let our world die because of climate change.

I would like to tell them that they should be doing more for the world in preparation for young generations like myself to take over, instead of creating a mass of problems for us to deal with. I would tell them that the Adani Coal Mine should be stopped and that renewable energy should be implemented into every household.

Take our environmental impact into consideration when making big decisions and keep in mind that young people have valid opinions.

I think Australia's response to climate change is a key reason so many young people are disillusioned with politics as a whole.

You're not listening. We could scream our problems and issues from the top of the tallest tower and no one would listen. We just want to be heard and respected. Our environment is dying, people are dying, we are getting shut down and ignored. We have problems too, please help us fix them.

I feel like the whole issue with the environment in this country is that it is a topic that has been overly politicised by the Government. Reform or legislation have been exploited in misinformation campaigns as a way of installing such fear in the public from wanting to support change.

We are people who are less privileged positions than you, who are relying on you to help us live our best lives. This has not been happening. We feel unheard and undervalued. There is no denying that climate change exists and is a huge issue the youth of today are going to directly face in the future. Taking action now is essential in ensuring we will be around in the future.

Environment, it's one of the most important ones that no one is taking seriously. Everywhere, there are not a lot of trees, just concrete and buildings (and I live in a country town, imagine what the city's like).

People believe that the state of our global environment is over-emphasised. But while we can become intrigued by other issues occurring, we forget about the deforestation, fires, floods, earthquakes, bleaching of the coral caused by the rising temperatures and man-inflicted pollution and damage done to our climate. We need to do more as a united country to help save our world.

The lack of positive change we are making towards preserving the environment is astounding.

Supporting mining and coal institutions may be lucrative in the short-term but investing in renewable energy will have high long-term rewards, as well as being able to set an example for the rest of the world as a first world nation.

Take climate change seriously, because right now, I have no reason to believe the federal Government has the capacity, let alone the power, to do anything about it.

Gender Diversity Summary

yourtown



Young people's Experience of Gender Diversity

In 2021 over 3,500 young people from around Australia engaged with **yourtown's** Your Voice Project. The project gave young people (aged 15-24) with the opportunity to voice their experiences, views on how services need to be improved and provide opportunities for them to inform policy.

3,500

Young People participated in Your Voice

12%

of participants identified as being part of the LGBTQIA+ community.

82%

of these participants said mental health was an issue.

88.5%

of these participants have accessed support specific to the LGBTQIA+ community.

What young people told us about Gender Diversity:

As a queer person myself, I know how difficult it can be to find services created to help. LGBTQIA+ issues are never talked about in school, and rarely in homes as well, meaning children often have no idea there is even help available for them. And many youths feel they cannot turn to their family to ask for support due to homophobic households or ignorant people, making it even harder to access support.

LGBTQIA+ young people told us they face stigma and discrimination in their daily lives, at home, school and in the community.

I haven't tried to access services for this as my family is religious.

I'm asexual and I just feel like it's hard cause a lot of people don't really see it as a thing but it can make me feel quite isolated.

More queer education needs to be provided to institutions. I went to a conservative, religious high school and was outed by a teacher because 'it conflicted with her Christian values'. Anyway, she told my EXTREMELY homophobic parents and she put me in danger. I wasn't ready, so I denied it. I can't wait to move out.

Don't know where to look. How do I find services? No one tells me where to go, I'm left as a 15 year old, not knowing what to do, while having trouble with my gender at home.

School was where I came out and the teachers dealt with it terribly, causing a dreadful mental health spiral. I am fortunate enough to be school captain at my school and I'm very public about my sexuality, hoping this will help other kids at the school with knowing they have a person to talk to.

Schools do nothing about LGBTQIA+ bullying and harassment.

Services for this is better than some others, however, there should be more to a focus in preventing discrimination - education and early intervention could be effective.

The only real LGBTQIA+ services I've had available to me are Kids Helpline and my school's LGBTQIA+ club. Even though I attend an actively LGBT-inclusive school, I still feel nervous to attend pride meetings or talk to student services about my sexuality. The LGBTQIA+ community is still seen as this 'outside' group. Although the LGBTQIA+ meetings are good for feeling a sense of connection and validation, they lack the education about sexuality/gender that LGBT students so desperately need.

There is a lack of services targeted towards trans and gender diverse people. The only services I have accessed have not been good. There is still the possibility of facing misgendering, gate keeping and other bad experiences.

READ THE FULL YOUR VOICE REPORT



Young people told us that the lack of safety and inclusive practices when accessing support meant that they were not always able to access the support they required.

Had my mental health worker laugh at my preferred pronouns and when I told him that I was questioning my gender, and wished I could be more androgynous.

I am afraid to admit to my psychiatrist that I am bisexual. I am afraid she will judge me and dismiss my sexuality.

I am misgendered at most services I access which causes significant distress and can stop me trying to reach out for help when I need it.

It's really hard and I often get micro-aggression from health care workers or government people. I feel like I need to hide my queerness. This is extremely difficult and demoralising. Getting services as a trans person is one of the most draining and upsetting things that I have had to do.

There are too little services available for the amount of young LGBTQIA+ people who need them. Again, this is no fault of the employers, but the system. Wait times are astronomical, and there is often a rushed 'in and out' type service you receive once you are granted a space at the service.

Accessing services? What services? I've been given none in all of my high school life.

I found it difficult to find services that help with bullying due to my sexuality. There was nothing at my school or anywhere near that was anonymous.

Many services still require you to list a title (Miss, Mr, etc.) and there is often a drop down which does not include Mx or anything gender neutral. Titles should be optional or more extensive or customisable.

It always surprises me how much stigma there is in places built to help us.

That they need to do something about the bullying that LGBTQIA+ and disabled students receive in schools.

Young people told us that the lack of consent and relationship education for LGBTQIA+ youth was a concern, and led to further stigma, micro-aggression and bullying from their peers.

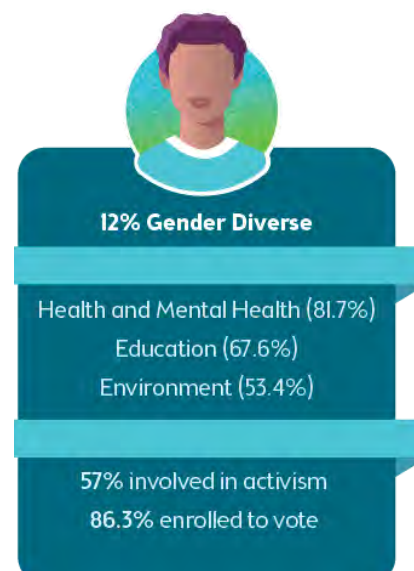
There was a serious lack of LGBTQIA+ education during high school. It took me until after high school to figure out that I identified as part of that community, and it would have helped a lot if there wasn't as much stigma around it early on.

As a non-binary person, there is little to no outlets for finding others like me in Australia. Not to mention the growing Transphobia in the world making things increasingly frightening. There is almost NO advertising for LGBT+ services that I am aware of. The only ones I can think of are tiny subsections of other groups.

Nothing is taught to young kids and they're growing up homophobic.

That LGBTQIA+ kids need some real help, we get no queer sex education, no education on discrimination, so kids grow up to be homophobic because they were never taught any different.

To reduce negative stereotypes, update our sex education curriculum as a whole, and provide adequate resources to LGBTQIA+ youth, we need mandatory LGBTQIA+ inclusive sex education in schools. It shouldn't be sparse!! It should be comprehensive.



Safety Summary

yourtown



Young people's Experience of Safety

In 2021 over 3,500 young people from around Australia engaged with **yourtown's** Your Voice Project. The project gave young people (aged 15-24) with the opportunity to voice their experiences, views on how services need to be improved and provide opportunities for them to inform policy.

3,500

Young People
participated in Your
Voice

20%

of participants said they feel
unsafe, and 59% of gender
diverse participants feel
unsafe.

20%

of participants that raised
safety as an issue have
experienced abuse.

19%

of participants have
faced mental health
stigma.

What young people told us about Safety:

Please listen to your people. Some of us are struggling and aren't being heard. Our differences shouldn't set us apart. Everyone deserves respect and human decency, a safe place, a home, a stable income, support, and a welcoming country. We need to improve our country for the benefit of [all] our people, so please help us.

Young people told us that they faced stigma, racism and discrimination for who they are.

I would also like to talk about the fact that the LGBTQIA+ and gender diverse people are given hardly any support and have no idea how to access anything. Many young people in these situations are facing hate from those around them, including family. We need support and we need to know how to find it.

Not enough is being done for young minorities, especially queer people, disabled people, and ethnic minorities. Often cycles of disadvantage impact these groups and not enough is being done.

That LGBTQIA+ kids need some real help, we get no queer sex education, no education on discrimination so kids grow up to be homophobic because they were never taught any different.

If you're a young person and your parent's aren't good, as in abusive, not supportive, homophobic, that's literally bad luck, and there's not much help. There's a lot of people who apply for youth allowance and are denied because their parents earn too much, but their parents say, 'you're 17, get out of my house!'

Everyday, I experience some form of racism, whether it be in the form of jokes, or just plain discrimination and use of stereotypes.

You need to make sure girls and women are safe and can get the education they want. They shouldn't feel scared all the time. Same with the LGBTQIA+ and Aboriginal people. We choose you to fight for us.

READ THE FULL YOUR VOICE REPORT



Many young people, especially women, told us of their experiences of abuse and violence, at home, in schools, and in society at large.

You NEED to teach boys and men about the importance of consent. I've heard too many rape stories of the guys getting off fine and the women being told their clothes were an invitation.

More needs to be done in terms of safer environments for children living in domestic violence situations. If it wasn't for my family, a child who attends school with my brother would be homeless. P.s., a local burnout pad would be nice.

From the personal stories from others and workers in the sector of foster housing and regulation, there are plenty of issues and trauma that is being swept under the mat.

Left abusive home at 14, because my mother was still technically my legal guardian and still claiming Centrelink, it made the process incredibly hard. Additionally, because of my age, I fit too close to youth allowance for special benefit but was under 16 so ineligible for youth allowance.

When I was 18, I left a DV relationship and went on the streets. I went into a youth shelter. It was such a long waiting period, and I had to be referred to this shelter, so it wasn't easy to get in. I wish more places like this existed. I used to see people waiting at the door asking to come in. It's sad - everyone is under 24. Big demand, low supply of beds.

Growing up in a household with domestic abuse was extremely difficult. My mother had no access or knowledge of how to free us from the situation. Teachers at school who saw my bruises, just stared and never once tried to help me. No one helped me, even though there were signs.

I know a few people who have been sexually assaulted and that was taken to court. The stigma was horrible, and no one knew anything about that process, let alone what a horribly hard process it was. That process is hard enough, but as a young person it's far too hard which means that people don't come forward about it.

That the education system needs to change, and it needs to change now. People aren't feeling safe in schools which should be a place that they can feel safe.

That they need to do something about the bullying that LGBTQIA+ and disabled students receive in schools.

Young people told us that a lack of safety and experiences of abuse, negatively impacted on their access to services.

There are not enough systems in place to support this nation's youth who belong to a minority group, or who do not have significant familial support. There needs to be bigger safety nets to stop these people falling through the cracks to give them the skills they need to live healthily and happily, and contribute to the Australian economy.

I would like to tell them that we need to teach kids from a young age, via education, to be respectful of others differences. We need to support refugee children as they are under so much stress of feeling different in their environment. We need to stand up for disadvantaged communities, such as ATSI, disabled kids/adults, people of colour and financially disadvantaged communities, via making equitable contributions.

I have firsthand experience being silenced, and I believe that it is vital to the wellbeing of minor's mental health as well as physical health to create a support system for children who have experienced family violence. What this would aim to do is empower young people to find this voice and speak up about violence. I want to help young people, like myself, be empowered and have a voice. For our country to have a future, we must invest in our young people. If we don't help young people who are in desperate need of our help, then we will not only see a plummet in the number of students in education, but also the number of children living with a roof over their head. We will also see the devastating effects on mental health. We must, this is not a suggestion, we must help young people find their voices in their times of trouble.

You need to make sure girls and women are safe and can get the education they want. They shouldn't feel scared all the time. Same with LGBTQIA+ and Aboriginal people.

