

Mental Health Summary



Young people's Experience of Mental Health

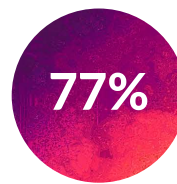
In 2021 over 3,500 young people from around Australia engaged with **yourtown's** Your Voice Project. The project gave young people (aged 15-24) with the opportunity to voice their experiences, views on how services need to be improved and provide opportunities for them to inform policy.



Young People participated in Your Voice



participants have accessed mental health services.



of participants said mental health was a key issue.



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.



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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.