

Kids Helpline Insights 2015

NATIONAL
STATISTICAL
OVERVIEW



Insights
Into Young
People in
Australia

Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ASGS	Australian Statistical Geography Standard
ATSI	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
CALD	culturally and linguistically diverse
EDO	early drop out (phone calls to Kids Helpline abandoned in first 21 seconds)
KHL	Kids Helpline
TSI	Torres Strait Islander

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For further information, contact **yourtown** on 07 3368 3399, email yourtown@yourtown.com.au or visit www.yourtown.com.au. For media enquiries, call 07 3867 1248 or email communications@yourtown.com.au.

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Executive summary

About this report

This report provides a statistical overview of the Kids Helpline service for 2015, including the:

- Kids Helpline counselling and support service
- Kids Helpline website, and
- Kids Helpline @ School program.

It presents 2015 and, where relevant, short- and longer-term trend data in relation to:

- service demand
- client characteristics
- client needs and concerns
- client communication preferences
- types of help-seeking, and
- client satisfaction and perception of service impact.

This edition of the *Overview* acknowledges the 25th anniversary of Kids Helpline with a special chapter. Chapter 6 provides a brief statistical snapshot of the services Kids Helpline has delivered to the community over this quarter century and offers some preliminary insights into the changing profile and needs of children and young people contacting the service over this time.

Kids Helpline counselling and support service

Kids Helpline (KHL) is Australia's only free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. KHL celebrates its 25th Birthday in 2016. In that time, we have responded to more than 7.5 million contacts.

We give children and young people choices, support and someone to listen. Tertiary qualified counsellors provide free, private and confidential support via telephone, web chat and email. The service aims to respond to the needs of children and young people enabling them to develop strategies and skills to better manage their lives.

Service demand and responsiveness

- *Numbers of attempted and answered contacts.* In 2015, 350,117 attempts were made to contact the counselling and support service, 83% of these by phone, 12% by web chat and 5% by email. Of these attempts, 209,803 were answered by counsellors, corresponding to an overall response rate of 60%.
- *Improved response rates.* Steady improvements in response rates are evident for phone and web chat over the last three years while the email response rate remained constant at 100%. The adjusted phone response rate increased from 70% to 75%, while the web chat response rate increased more dramatically, from 39% to 55%.
- *Reduced wait times.* There have been notable decreases in mean wait times for both answered and unanswered phone and web chat contacts between 2013 and 2015. The mean wait time for answered web chat contacts has more than halved from 2013 to 2015 (from 60 minutes to 24 minutes) while for answered phone contacts it has decreased by 30% (from 2:06 min:sec to 1:28 min:sec).
- *Increased time spent in direct client contact.* While the number of contacts responded to by Kids Helpline has gradually decreased over the last decade, the total time spent in client contact has steadily increased. The increase in time spent in client contact is in part due to the growing proportion of contacts requiring more intensive counselling-type responses (from 18% in 2007 to 34% in 2015) and the fact that the mean duration of counselling sessions has steadily increased since the service began (from 10 minutes in 1991 to 36 minutes in 2015).

Who contacted the service?

Of the 209,803 contacts responded to by the counselling and support service in 2015, 205,286 were known to be from children and young people aged 5-25 years – Kids Helpline’s target demographic. The data presented throughout Chapter 2 of this report pertain to this subset of contacts. Key demographic characteristics of these contacts include the following:

- *Gender.* Seven out of 10 contacts (71%) were from females while three out of 10 (29%) were from males. In 2015, Kids Helpline introduced a new category for gender – *intersex, trans and gender diverse*. A total of 619 contacts were recorded under this gender category.
- *Age.* More than half (55%) of all contacts were aged 13-18 years, one in three (33%) were 19-25 years, and one in eight (12%) were aged 5-12 years.
- *Cultural background.* Where information was available on cultural background (23% of all contacts), 4% were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), 34% as ‘culturally or linguistically diverse’ (CALD), and 63% as neither ATSI nor CALD.
- *Location.* Contacts were received from all states and territories closely in proportion to the state breakdown of the Australian population of children and young people. Where the child or young person’s postcode was known (29% of contacts), most were living in Major Cities (69%), one in five (21%) were living in Inner Regional localities, and one in 10 (10%) were living in Outer Regional or Remote localities.
- *Type of support relationship.* Where contacts’ relationship with the service was recorded (38% of all contacts), roughly one third (35%) were first time contacts and two-thirds (65%) were occasional contacts or receiving support on an ongoing basis.

Type of help-seeking

Kids Helpline counselling and support service contacts fall into two main sub-populations based on the kind of assistance they are looking for – those seeking counselling support and those seeking information, referral or some other type of support.

- In 2015, 70,210 (or 34%) of all contacts aged 5-25 years were seeking counselling support while 135,076 (or 66%) were seeking information, referral or other support.

Medium of contact

- In 2015, four out of five contacts (81%) from children and young people aged 5-25 years were answered by phone, 11% by web chat and 8% by email.
- Children and young people’s choice to engage with the service via particular media was observed to be related to their gender, age, cultural background, remoteness, type of support relationship to the service and type of help-seeking.
- Almost every subgroup of the Kid Helpline population analysed, except contacts known to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, increased their preference for web chat over the last three years while reducing their preference for email contact. Preference for engagement by phone remained constant for most subgroups, although it decreased slightly among contacts from Major Cities and among female contacts, and increased among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander contacts.

Most common concerns of children and young people seeking counselling

- During 2015, Kids Helpline counsellors responded to 70,210 contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years who were seeking help about specific problems or concerns (i.e. counselling contacts).
 - Just over one in five (22%) were concerned about mental health – their own or that of another person.
 - Just less than one in five had family relationship concerns (19%) or concerns about emotional wellbeing (18%).
 - One in 10 had concerns about dating or partner relationships (11%), suicide-related issues (11%), or friend/peer relationships (10%).
 - About one in 15 had concerns about child abuse (7%), self-injury (6%), or bullying (6%).
 - One in 20 (5%) were concerned about study and education issues.
- The proportional frequency with which counselling contacts raised these concerns with counsellors over the last three years, and in fact *all categories of concern*, has remained unchanged.

- The concerns of counselling contacts were found in 2015 to vary:
 - greatly according to contacts' age group and cultural background
 - moderately according to their gender, and
 - slightly according to their chosen medium of contact.

Remoteness classification appeared to have negligible association with the concerns for which children and young people were seeking counselling support.

- For the first time in 2015, analysis of gender differences in the concerns of counselling contacts included the new gender category *intersex, trans or gender diverse*. Compared to males and females, children and young people identifying as intersex, trans and gender diverse were proportionately:
 - much more likely to be contacting in relation to concern about gender/sex identification (39% c.f. 1% for males and 0% for females)
 - moderately more likely to contact about sexuality/sexual orientation issues (8% c.f. 2% for males and 1% for females), and
 - less likely to contact regarding all other issues, most notably mental health, emotional wellbeing, dating and partner relationships, and friend and peer relationships.

This analysis should not be interpreted to mean that children and young people who are intersex, trans or gender diverse experience issues such as mental health difficulties less often than other children or young people. Rather, it indicates there are differences in the help-seeking behaviour of those who identify as intersex, trans or gender diverse compared with those who either identify as male or female or are assumed by counsellors to be male or female based on their self-presentation. Numerous studies (noted in the body of the report) indicate that individuals who are same-sex attracted or intersex, trans, or gender diverse are more likely than heterosexual or cisgendered individuals to experience mental health disorders, suicidal ideation and bullying.

Referral to further support and duty of care interventions

The counselling and support service endeavours to provide a holistic service to children and young people, linking them whenever appropriate and possible to other support services that may assist them to address issues causing them concern. In addition, there are times when counsellors contact external agencies directly to engage support for a client and/or to protect a client who is experiencing harm or who is at imminent risk of harm.

- In 2015, 30% of counselling contacts needed referral to another professional or agency for support:
 - 14% were referred to a generalist service or practitioner
 - 10% were referred to a specific service for ongoing support, and
 - 6% were unable to be referred because either the child or young person declined the referral, there were no appropriate services available, or the child or young person finished the session prematurely.
- In 2015, there were a total of 2,207 records of counsellors attempting to contact an external agency or agencies to support a child or young person and/or to protect them from significant harm or imminent risk of significant harm. Four out of five of these records (1,720, or 78%) concerned a duty of care intervention.
- Child abuse and suicide attempts were by far the most common reasons for duty of care interventions in 2015 (39% and 33% respectively).
- From 2013 to 2015, there has been:
 - a decrease in the proportion of duty of care interventions precipitated by suicide attempts, self-injury and drug overdose, and
 - an increase in the proportion of interventions precipitated by concern about child abuse.

Children and young people seeking counselling for particular issues

When counsellors record children or young people as having a particular concern, they specify one of a number of subcategories relating to that concern to capture the specific concern more fully. Analysis of concern subcategories is provided for four categories of concern that are of contemporary policy interest: mental health, suicide, self-injury and child abuse. This analysis highlights that key aspects of the work of Kids Helpline in relation to children and young people with these issues is:

- crisis intervention
- harm minimisation and prevention, and/or

- supporting children and young people to manage significant and ongoing issues impacting on their health and wellbeing.

Mental health

- Half (50%) of contacts with mental health as a concern in 2015 ($N = 15,230$) were contacting about support or strategies to manage an established disorder.
- Almost two fifths (38%) were contacting about the symptoms of an undiagnosed mental health condition.
- A small proportion (7%) was contacting to discuss their concern about another person's mental health.

Suicide

- Most (77%) contacts concerned about suicide in 2015 ($N = 7,562$) were contacting about current suicidal thoughts or fears.
- Roughly one in seven (14%) were contacting to discuss concern about another person's suicidal thoughts or feelings.
- One in 12 (8%) reported an immediate intention to suicide or that they were attempting suicide at the time.

Self-injury

- Most (78%) contacts concerned about self-injury in 2015 ($N = 4,466$) were seeking help to avoid acts of self-injury.
- One in eight (13%) were contacting to discuss concern about another person's self-harming.

Child abuse

- Two out of three contacts (66%) concerned about child abuse in 2015 ($N = 5,147$) were contacting in relation to current abuse or risk of abuse.
- About one in five (22%) were contacting in relation to the impacts of past abuse.

Counselling contacts experiencing significant mental health issues

- During 2015:
 - three in 10 counselling contacts (31%) were identified by Kids Helpline's tertiary-qualified counsellors as either experiencing a mental health disorder or symptoms indicative of a mental health disorder
 - about one in seven (15%) were identified as experiencing current difficulties with self-injury
 - one in 10 (11%) disclosed current thoughts of suicide to counsellors, and
 - almost two out of five counselling contacts (38%) were assessed as experiencing at least one of these issues.
- The frequency with which mental health issues are assessed by counsellors as present has remained relatively stable over the last three years, as has the frequency with which clients disclose to counsellors they are experiencing current thoughts of suicide.
- There would appear to be a decrease, however, in the frequency with which counsellors identify children and young people as experiencing issues with self-injury (from 22% in 2013 to 15% in 2015) and the frequency with which they identify counselling contacts to be experiencing at least one of these issues (from 43% in 2013 to 38% in 2015).

Kids Helpline website

In addition to the counselling and support service, Kids Helpline operates a website for self-directed help-seeking by children, young people and adults (www.kidshelp.com.au). The self-help resources provided on the website, and in particular the *Tips & Info* pages for 'kids', 'teens' and 'parents', have been developed by clinical staff and researchers. They are intended to provide information and strategies to assist users in responding to common issues and concerns.

Service demand

- In 2015 there were 720,077 unique visitors to the Kids Helpline website who collectively participated in close to a million (919,589) web sessions.
- Over the last three years, web sessions have increased by 28% and unique visitors by 35%.
- Demand has not grown equally for all self-help resources. While page views of teens *Tips & Info* topics have increased by 79% over the three years, page views of children and young people's self-submitted stories have decreased by 17%.

Key concerns of website visitors

Demand for 'Tips & Info'

Demand for particular information resources, like *Tips & Info*, provides some insight into the concerns and interests of website visitors.

- Kids
 - In 2015, there were a total of 45 kids *Info & Info* topics available, collectively receiving 48,033 page views.
 - 38% of all kids *Tips & Info* page views were in relation to five topics – *staying safe online, taking risks, fights with friends, bullying, and peer pressure*. The first four of these issues were the four most common topics of interest to children in 2014 as well, suggesting some continuity in the issues of concern to this age group.
- Teens
 - In 2015, there were a total of 51 teens *Tips & Info* topics available, collectively receiving 312,619 page views.
 - 37% of all teens *Tips & Info* page views were in relation to five topics – *peer pressure, leaving home, body image, resilience and risky behaviour*. The topics *peer pressure, leaving home and body image* were also among the five most frequently visited teens *Tips & Info* topics in 2014.
- Parents
 - In 2015, there were a total of 41 *Tips & Info* topics on the website targeted at adults – primarily parents, guardians, teachers and other significant adults in children's lives. These resources collectively received 194,336 page views.
 - Close to half (46%) of all parent *Tips & Info* page views were in relation to five topics – *anxiety, cyberbullying, cross-cultural differences, being resilient and risk-taking*. The four most commonly viewed topics for adults in 2015 were also the most viewed topics for adults in 2014.

Referrals from other websites

Referrals from other organisations' websites are another source of information about the needs and concerns of website visitors.

- The Australian Government's eSafety (formerly Cybersmart) website was the top referring website with over 8,300 referrals to the Kids Helpline website in 2015.
- Close to 3,000 referrals to the Kids Helpline website came from other cyber-safety and anti-bullying websites.
- Close to 14,000 referrals came from youth and generalist mental health and counselling websites.

Emerging themes of concern

- *Cybersafety and bullying*. The large number of cybersafety and anti-bullying referrals to Kids Helpline website and the frequency with which website visitors of all age groups consulted *Tips & Info* topics on cybersafety issues (online safety, sexting, cyberbullying) and bullying suggest that cybersafety and bullying are both major concerns of young Australians today and those responsible for their care.
- *Mental health*. Similarly, the large number of mental health and counselling website referrals received, and the frequency with which Kids Helpline website visitors of all age groups consulted *Tips & Info* topics on mental health issues (including anxiety, depression, body image, resilience, loneliness, self-harm, suicide, etc.) suggest that this is another key area of concern for children and young people and the adults who care for them.

Kids Helpline @ School program

- Kids Helpline @ School is an early intervention and prevention program for primary school-aged children. Funded by Optus, the program offers primary schools a professional counsellor-facilitated classroom session via video technology to discuss topics impacting on the lives of students with the objectives of building children's mental health literacy, resilience and capacity to seek help when required.
- In 2015, the second full calendar year of the program's operation, 17,211 primary school students from 175 schools participated in a total of 626 classroom sessions with a Kids Helpline counsellor.
- Year 2 of an in-house study to evaluate program quality and impact on teachers and students was completed in November 2015. The evaluation found the program continued to achieve its objectives, with teachers and students both reporting students' improved knowledge, awareness and skills in managing issues discussed in the sessions as well as positive changes in students' behaviour.

Kids Helpline annual client satisfaction and outcome survey

yourtown believes that service users provide an essential perspective in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of Kids Helpline services. One way that **yourtown** engages the views of Kids Helpline service users is through an annual client satisfaction and outcome survey.

Methodology

A brief online survey, comprising a combination of open-response and fixed-response items, was conducted over seven weeks between December 2015 and February 2016. The survey was open to any individual who had accessed the Kids Helpline counselling and support service or visited the Kids Helpline website within the last 12 months.

Key findings

Sample

- A total of 300 people responded to the survey, 285 of whom reported being aged 5-25 years. Four out of five respondents (80%) were female and 73% were aged between 13 and 18 years. All states and territories were represented.

Type of engagement with Kids Helpline in the last 12 months

- A total of 261 respondents (87%) had contacted the counselling and support service and 149 respondents (50%) had visited the website.
- Among respondents who had visited the website in the last 12 months, the information resource most commonly accessed was *Tips & Info*, viewed by two out of three respondents (66%), followed by young people's self-submitted stories, viewed by three out of five (58%) respondents.

Perceived impact of Kids Helpline counselling and support service

- Three out of four respondents (75%) who had accessed the counselling and support service reported having more ideas for dealing with their problems after speaking to a counsellor and more than two out of three (69%) felt more capable of dealing with their problems.

Perceived impact of Tips & Info topics

- Almost three out of five respondents (59%) reported having more ideas for dealing with their problems after reading a *Tips & Info* topic and just more than half (52%) felt more capable of dealing with their problems.

Overall satisfaction

- 93% of respondents said they would recommend Kids Helpline to a friend and 78% reported that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with Kids Helpline. Six per cent indicated that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with Kids Helpline.

Twenty-five years of Kids Helpline – a statistical snapshot

The Kids Helpline counselling and support service turns 25 in March 2015. This year's *Overview* includes a brief statistical snapshot of the services Kids Helpline has delivered to the community over the last 25 years and offers some preliminary insights into the changing profile and needs of children and young people contacting the service over this time

Scale of services delivered

From 25 March 1991 until 31 December 2015, the counselling and support service responded to more than seven and half million (7,533,821) contacts from children and young people. Ninety-five per cent (7,187,398) of these contacts were received via phone and the remainder by email (190,563) or web chat (155,860).

This is equivalent to responding to a contact from a child or young person every 1.7 minutes continuously for 25 years.

Trends in demand for counselling vs. non-counselling support

Twenty-eight per cent of contacts responded to by Kids Helpline over the 25 years were seeking counselling support, while the remainder (72%) were seeking information, referral or other forms of support.

The number of counselling contacts received per year have remained relatively stable over the last decade, but as a proportion of all contacts, they have steadily increased, as has the average time spent by counsellors in

responding to the needs of counselling contacts since the service began (from 10 minutes per session in 1991 to 36 minutes in 2015).

Change in demographic profile of counselling contacts

The demographic profile of contacts seeking counselling support from Kids Helpline has changed considerably over the last 25 years. Compared with counselling contacts during the first five years of the service (1991 to 1995), counselling contacts over the most recent five years (2011-2015) are:

- older on average (17 years c.f. 14 years)
- more likely to be female than they were (81% c.f. 67%)
- more likely to be attending post-secondary education and training than previously (18% c.f. 1%) and less likely to be at secondary school (54% c.f. 75%)
- more likely to be living in Major Cities than they were (72% c.f. 60%), and
- more likely to be from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds than in the earlier period (28% c.f. 3%) while less likely to be neither CALD nor Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (69% c.f. 95%).

Change and continuity in the issues of concern to children and young people seeking counselling

Since 1996, there have been two classification systems used for recording the concerns of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline, one operating from May 1996 until the end of 2011, and a second from the start of 2012. A number of concern categories are sufficiently similar to permit analysis of trends over the entire period from 1996 to 2015. Others have been re-coded into continuous concern categories by joining various concern types together during the two periods.

The following analysis pertains to the 14 continuous concern categories constructed in this way which collectively account for 85% of main concerns recorded between May 1996 and December 2015.

Most common concerns over time

From 1996 to 2015, the seven issues that children and young people have contacted Kids Helpline about most often are, in order of their relative frequency:

- Mental and/or emotional health or illness, including self-injury (17% of all counselling contacts received since May 1996)
- Family relationships (16%)
- Peer relationships (12%)
- Partner relationships, including partner violence (9%)
- Child abuse and/or family/domestic violence (6%)
- Bullying (5%), and
- Suicide (4%).

Trend analysis of clients' main concern

Analysis of concern data over the 20-year period indicates both continuity and change in the main concerns of children and young people contacting the service.

- *Family relationships, peer relationships and partner relationships, including partner violence*, were the three most common main concerns of counselling contacts in the first five years (1996-2001). In the most recent five-year period (2011-2015) these concern categories remained among the five most common main concerns. This suggests a great deal of continuity overall in the concerns that children and young people seek counselling in relation to.
- The recorded frequency of 10 of the 14 main concern categories shows a percentage decrease over time. This reflects the fact that counselling contacts have reduced overall by 25% from 1996-2000 to 2011-2015.
- Despite this overall decrease in counselling contacts, three categories of concern show percentage increases that are substantial and noteworthy, namely:
 - a 626% increase in the frequency with which issues regarding *mental and/or emotional health or illness, including self-injury*, have been recorded as the contact's main concern

- a 246% increase in the frequency with which concern about *suicide* has been raised for counselling, and
- a 58% increase in the frequency with which *study and/or education issues* have been discussed with counsellors as the main concern of the client.
- Various innovations in the operation of Kids Helpline designed to improve responsiveness to client need help to explain these observed increases, particularly the increases mental health and suicide concerns. These innovations include:
 - extending age eligibility for service from 18 to 25 years in 2003 (all three concern categories that have increased in frequency are positively correlated with age)
 - substantial training and professionalisation of counselling staff in recognising and responding to mental health conditions in the early to mid 2000s, and
 - changing service model, including expanding provision of case management services to individuals with complex support needs including mental health issues.

Growing awareness and acceptance of mental health issues in the broader community are also likely to have played a role, increasing children and young people's recognition of these issues and/or their willingness to seek help.

Key themes from the data

Four key themes emerge from reviewing the data presented in the 2015 *Overview* report.

Theme 1 Kids Helpline plays a multifaceted role in protecting young Australians from abuse and harm

Taken together, the chapters of this report highlight the comprehensive role that Kids Helpline continues to play in protecting children and young people from abuse and harm. The child protection work of the service includes primary, secondary and tertiary prevention activities:

- *Primary prevention* activities are universal or non-targeted services for children and young people that aim to reduce their vulnerability to abuse and other harms. Kids Helpline's primary prevention activities include:
 - information, referral and counselling support for children and young people via phone, web chat and email any time of the day in relation to any issue of concern to the child or young person
 - self-help resources on the Kids Helpline website for children, teenagers and adults, including material focused on building children and young people's resilience and on keeping children and young people safe, and
 - the Kids Helpline @ School program, which aims to build children and young people's resilience, help-seeking behaviours, coping strategies and knowledge of sources of help, with a focus on preventing and responding to negative online experiences.
- *Secondary prevention* activities are targeted at children and young people experiencing abuse or harm or at imminent risk of abuse or harm and aim to reduce the impact or seriousness of the harm. Kids Helpline's secondary prevention activities include providing crisis responses and duty of care interventions via phone, web chat and email to children and young people experiencing or at significant risk of child abuse, family/domestic violence, suicide, and self-injury.
- *Tertiary prevention* activities are targeted at those already impacted by abuse, trauma or other harms and aim to help them manage or recover from these experiences. Tertiary prevention activities offered by Kids Helpline include counselling in relation to past abuse as well as case management to support children and young people with complex or ongoing issues associated with past trauma or abuse.

Theme 2 Continuing shifts in the nature of children and young people's help-seeking

The short- and longer-term trend data on service usage presented in this report highlight ongoing shifts in the nature of children and young people's help-seeking. These shifts can be summarised as follows:

- Children and young people's preferences for receiving information-based support are continuing to shift away from in-person delivery to internet-based provision:
 - Over the last three years there has been a decrease of 13% in the number of contacts received by the counselling and support service for information, referrals and other non-counselling support, equivalent to a reduction of 20,000 contacts over three years.

- During the same period, there has been an increase of 35% in the number of unique visitors to the Kids Helpline website, equivalent to an increase of 185,000 unique visitors over three years. Annual page views of *Tips & Info* topics for teens have almost doubled during this period, from 174,297 to 312,619 and page views of *Tips & Info* for kids have increased by 44%, from 33,344 to 48,033.
- There continues to be a gradual but steady shift in children and young people's medium-of-preference for contacting a counsellor – away from telephone and email towards web chat, and away from landlines to mobile phones.
- The intensity of support required by children and young people contacting the counselling and support service is steadily increasing. There is a growing number and proportion of contacts requiring more intensive counselling-type responses and counselling sessions themselves are becoming more substantial in nature to accommodate discussion of more complex issues.

Theme 3 Unique insights into the contemporary help-seeking needs of young Australians

This report provides valuable insights into the types of issues for which young Australians are seeking help, including both counselling-type support and information and referral support.

- In terms of children and young people contacting the Kids Helpline counselling and support service, the most common concerns of counselling contacts in 2015 were *mental health issues* (22%), *family relationship issues* (19%), *emotional wellbeing* (18%), *suicide* (11%) and *dating and partner relationships* (11%).
- In terms of children and young people visiting the Kids Helpline website, the most frequently viewed kids *Tips & Info* topics in 2015 were *staying safe online, taking risks, fights with friends, bullying, and feeling sad*, collectively accounting for 38% of all page views to these resources. The most frequently viewed teens *Tips & Info* topics in 2015 were *peer pressure, leaving home, body image, resilience and risky behaviour*, accounting for 37% of all page views to these resources.
- The most common sources of referral to the Kids Helpline website in 2015 were youth and generalist *mental health* and counselling websites and *cyber-safety* and *anti-bullying* websites providing another insight into the issues of concern for children and young people searching the web for resources to help them understand and manage issues impacting on them.

Theme 4 Critical importance of outcome evaluation and client feedback

This report emphasises the importance of undertaking ongoing outcome evaluation and investigation of client satisfaction in addition to analysing service trends. This is because services like Kids Helpline need not only to understand the specific help-seeking interests and concerns of our clients and how they want to receive information and support, but to make sure that the resources and support we provide meet their needs and make a difference in their lives. To this extent, **yourtown** believes service users provide an essential perspective in assessing the quality, accessibility, usability and effectiveness of services delivered.

yourtown is committed to evolving and continuously improving what it does and sharing what it learns in this process with others supporting young Australians in need of help.

1. Introduction

Welcome to *Kids Helpline's Insights 2015: National Statistical Overview* – a report documenting the work of the service for the 2015 calendar year. This special edition of the *Overview* celebrates the 25th anniversary of Kids Helpline with the inclusion of a statistical snapshot of the services delivered by Kids Helpline to the community over the last 25 years, and some preliminary insights into the changing profile and needs of children and young people contacting the service over this time.

1.1 What is Kids Helpline?

Kids Helpline is a free, confidential counselling and support service for children and young people across Australia aged 5-25 years. It specifically aims to *respond to the needs of children and young people enabling them to develop strategies and skills to better manage their lives*. To achieve this end, counselling and support services are provided by tertiary-qualified counsellors via telephone, web chat and email. Telephone and email counselling is provided 24/7 while web counselling is currently available from 12pm to 10pm (AEST) Monday to Friday and 10am to 10pm (AEST) Saturday and Sunday. In addition to the counselling and support service, Kids Helpline also operates a substantial website with a diverse range of resources for self-directed help-seeking by children, young people and adults. In partnership with Optus, Kids Helpline also delivers an early intervention and prevention program in primary schools called *Kids Helpline @ School*.

Kids Helpline is Australia's only 24/7 counselling and support service for children and young people. It is a service of **yourtown** (previously known as BoysTown), a not-for-profit organisation with over 55 years' experience helping disadvantaged children and young people overcome the challenges they face through counselling, support, employment and training services. The service is approximately 70% funded by the community through **yourtown's** Art Union ticket sales, donations and corporate support, which includes a partnership with Optus. The remaining 30% is funded through State and Commonwealth Government grants.

1.2 What this report is about and who it is for

Kids Helpline is uniquely positioned to inform governments, researchers and the general public about the help-seeking needs and concerns of children and young people in Australia today. It is custodian of valuable information about how these needs and concerns trend over time in response to changing social, cultural, economic and technological circumstances. **yourtown** believes that sharing this information with the community may ultimately assist with the development of more timely, appropriate and effective responses to the mental health and other needs of children and young people in our community.

This report provides a national statistical overview of the Kids Helpline service for 2015. It has been written especially for people working in social policy and research roles but will also be valuable to a wide range of organisations and professionals working with vulnerable children and young people in the community. Similarly, journalists and others in the community interested in understanding and documenting the current and changing needs and concerns of children and young people in Australia today will find the information useful.

The report has six further chapters and an appendix.

- *Chapter 2* presents data in relation to the Kids Helpline counselling and support service. This includes data about service demand and responsiveness, client characteristics, types of contacts, types of help-seeking, most common concerns of children and young people receiving counselling, the specific needs of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline about four concerns that are of contemporary social policy interest (mental health, suicide, self-injury and child abuse), and the prevalence of specific mental health difficulties among counselling contacts as assessed by Kids Helpline counsellors.
- *Chapter 3* presents data related to client engagement with the Kids Helpline website and trends emerging in demand for self-help resources.
- *Chapter 4* describes the main activities and outputs of the Kids Helpline @ School program in 2015 and the findings of the Year 2 outcome evaluation in relation to the second year of the program's operation.
- *Chapter 5* describes the objectives and methodology of the Kids Helpline annual client satisfaction and outcomes survey and presents key findings regarding children and young people's satisfaction with the Kids Helpline counselling and support service and website and their perception of service impact.

- *Chapter 6* is a special inclusion to acknowledge and celebrate the 25th anniversary of Kids Helpline. It provides a brief statistical snapshot of the services Kids Helpline has delivered to the community over this quarter century and offers some preliminary insights into the changing profile and needs of children and young people contacting the service over this time.
- *Chapter 7* concludes the report by drawing out key themes from the data presented in the report.

The report concludes with an appendix that provides essential background information on data collection, analysis and interpretation.

1.3 Where to get more information

This report has been compiled by **yourtown**'s Strategy and Research unit. For further information, please contact **yourtown** on 07 3368 3399, email yourtown@yourtown.com.au or visit www.yourtown.com.au.

2. Kids Helpline counselling and support service

This chapter presents a wide range of information about the current characteristics, needs, concerns, communication preferences and types of help-seeking of children and young people contacting the Kids Helpline counselling and support service. Understanding this population is important for **yourtown** in continuously improving Kids Helpline. However, it is also valuable to a wide range of community and government agencies providing, designing or advocating for support services or mental health interventions for vulnerable children and young people.

To help build understanding about children and young people's contemporary needs and concerns, current (2015), short-term (2013-2015) and occasionally longer-term trend analysis are presented in this chapter in relation to the following aspects of the Kids Helpline counselling and support service:

- service demand and responsiveness
- client characteristics
- types of help-seeking by different groups of children and young people
- how children and young people contact Kids Helpline (by phone, web chat or email) and which groups of children prefer which medium of engagement
- most common concerns of children and young people, including analysis by clients' medium of engagement, age group, gender, cultural background, geographical remoteness, and type of support relationship with the service (i.e. first/occasional contact or ongoing support)
- the specific needs of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline about four concerns that are of contemporary social policy interest (mental health, suicide, self-injury and child abuse), and
- estimates of the prevalence of significant mental health issues among Kids Helpline counselling contacts based on counsellor assessments.

2.1 Service demand and responsiveness

In order to continue to meet the needs of children and young people who contact Kids Helpline, it is important to understand patterns of service demand and responsiveness and changes over time. Service demand and responsiveness are complex concepts in this service environment; accordingly, four dimensions of service demand/responsiveness are considered in order to provide a full and balanced picture. These dimensions are as follows:

- the number of attempted and answered contacts and corresponding response rates
- the length of time clients waited to be answered by a counsellor
- the type of service engaged by clients (i.e. counselling support or information/referral/other support), and
- time spent by counsellors in direct client contact.

Data are presented for 2015 but also, in some instances, over three, 10 and 25 years where this is necessary to demonstrate emerging trends. Taken together, the data presented in this section indicate that the proportion of clients requiring more intensive counselling-type responses is growing steadily each year and that the overall time invested by the service in responding to the needs of children and young people is also increasing steadily despite an overall reduction in numbers of contacts responded to. The service is steadily improving in its responsiveness attempted contacts: clients are wait a shorter time to be responded to and (adjusted) response rates are steadily improving.

2.1.1 Attempted/answered contacts and response rates

Unadjusted data

Table 1 summarises data from Kids Helpline's telephone, email and web chat data systems in relation to attempted and answered contacts from children, young people and other members of the community over the last three years. In particular, it presents:

- the number of attempted and answered contacts for each of the three contact media (phone, web chat, and email) and aggregates these for 'all media'

- percentage change in the number of attempted contacts from 2013 to 2015 for each medium and for all media
- the breakdown of attempted and answered contacts, response rates and percentage change in attempts for each state estimated from the best available information about contacts' state of origin, and
- the breakdown of attempted and answered phone contacts, response rates and percentage change in attempts according to whether or not calls were made from mobile phones or landlines.

Key observations from the data about *service demand in 2015* include the following:

- *Attempted and answered contacts and response rates.* In 2015, 350,117 attempts were made to contact the Kids Helpline counselling and support service, 83% of these by phone (290,767), 12% by web chat (43,464) and 5% by email (15,886). Of these attempts, 209,803 were answered by counsellors, corresponding to an overall response rate of 60%.
- *State differences.* The number of attempted and answered contacts varies substantially from state to state reflecting the relative size of the different states. Response rates across states in 2015 ranged from 57% in the Northern Territory to 68% in Tasmania.
- *Mobile and landline differences.* In 2015, mobile calls made up 77% of phone attempts, while landlines made up 23%. The response rate for mobile calls was lower than for landlines (57% c.f. 63%) which may reflect an incorrect assumption on the part of mobile callers that they are being charged for the time they wait to be answered by a counsellor.

Key observations from Table I about *trends in demand over the last three years*

- *Percentage change in attempted contacts.* Across all media, a 10% decrease in attempted contacts was observed over the last three years. Phone attempts decreased by 9%, web chat attempts by 8% and email attempts decreased by 34%¹.
- *Mobile and landline attempts.* The number of attempted contacts from both mobile and landline phones decreased between 2013 and 2015; however the percentage decline for mobiles was considerably less than for landlines (4% c.f. 21%). This is because the proportion of mobiles attempts has increased over this period (from 73% in 2013 to 77% in 2015) while the proportion of landline attempts has decreased (from 27% in 2013 to 23% in 2015).
- *Changes in response rates.* Overall for the service, response rates have remain consistent between 2013 and 2015; however, the response rate for web chat has increased considerably over the last three years, from 39% to 55%.

¹ The reduction in email attempts may be in part due to a Kids Helpline policy, in the interests of service efficiency and effectiveness, to transition email clients to web or phone.

Table 1. Attempted and answered contacts – by medium, state and year of contact^{1,2}

Medium of contact	2013			2014			2015			% change in attempts 2013-2015
	Attempts	Answered	Response rate	Attempts	Answered	Response rate	Attempts	Answered	Response rate	
Phone										
ACT	3,462	1,939	56%	3,450	1,994	58%	4,108	2,441	59%	19%
NSW	119,559	68,838	58%	112,118	63,796	57%	113,447	65,281	58%	-5%
NT	1,678	986	59%	1,531	811	53%	2,482	1,396	56%	48%
QLD	68,535	42,202	62%	58,640	34,249	58%	53,146	30,629	58%	-22%
SA	18,005	10,661	59%	21,211	12,657	60%	19,607	12,133	62%	9%
TAS	7,165	4,351	61%	5,017	3,139	63%	5,748	3,812	66%	-20%
VIC	78,199	47,258	60%	74,657	43,812	59%	67,894	40,247	59%	-13%
WA	22,029	13,158	60%	23,577	13,294	56%	24,335	13,863	57%	10%
All States	318,633	189,394	59%	300,200	173,752	58%	290,767	169,802	58%	-9%
Ph. type										
Mobile	234,088	137,609	59%	224,008	126,510	56%	223,957	127,886	57%	-4%
Landline	84,545	51,785	61%	76,192	47,242	62%	66,810	41,916	63%	-21%
Web chat										
ACT	903	286	32%	1,022	405	40%	1,077	608	56%	19%
NSW	17,069	6,542	38%	17,748	7,735	44%	15,078	8,363	55%	-12%
NT	166	64	38%	175	49	28%	138	76	55%	-17%
QLD	8,923	3,470	39%	9,316	4,056	44%	7,929	4,461	56%	-11%
SA	2,947	1,083	37%	2,924	1,232	42%	2,646	1,515	57%	-10%
TAS	1,020	471	46%	1,006	440	44%	909	487	53%	-11%
VIC	12,945	5,520	43%	14,009	5,873	42%	12,472	6,848	55%	-4%
WA	3,363	1,242	37%	3,229	1,293	40%	3,215	1,757	55%	-4%
All States	47,335	18,678	39%	49,429	21,082	43%	43,464	24,115	55%	-8%
Email										
ACT	288	288	100%	286	286	100%	244	244	100%	-15%
NSW	7,289	7,289	100%	5,306	5,306	100%	4,500	4,500	100%	-38%
NT	167	167	100%	44	44	100%	39	39	100%	-77%
QLD	5,261	5,261	100%	3,884	3,884	100%	3,230	3,230	100%	-39%
SA	1,618	1,618	100%	1,897	1,897	100%	1,620	1,620	100%	0%
TAS	1,092	1,092	100%	752	752	100%	622	622	100%	-43%
VIC	6,368	6,368	100%	4,998	4,998	100%	4,225	4,225	100%	-34%
WA	1,918	1,918	100%	1,664	1,664	100%	1,406	1,406	100%	-27%
All States	24,000	24,000	100%	18,832	18,832³	100%	15,886⁴	15,886	100%	-34%
All media										
ACT	4,653	2,513	54%	4,758	2,685	56%	5,429	3,293	61%	17%
NSW	143,917	82,669	57%	135,172	76,837	57%	133,026	78,145	59%	-8%
NT	2,011	1,217	61%	1,750	904	52%	2,659	1,510	57%	32%
QLD	82,719	50,933	62%	71,840	42,189	59%	64,305	38,320	60%	-22%
SA	22,570	13,362	59%	26,032	15,786	61%	23,873	15,268	64%	6%
TAS	9,277	5,914	64%	6,775	4,331	64%	7,278	4,920	68%	-22%
VIC	97,512	59,146	61%	93,664	54,683	58%	84,591	51,320	61%	-13%
WA	27,310	16,318	60%	28,470	16,251	57%	28,956	17,026	59%	6%
All States	389,968	232,072	60%	368,461	213,666	58%	350,117	209,803	60%	-10%

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

2. State breakdowns presented in this table vary slightly from data reported prior to 2014 due to the use of different extrapolation methodologies.

3. In addition to 18,832 emails received and responded to in 2014, 544 outreach emails were sent.

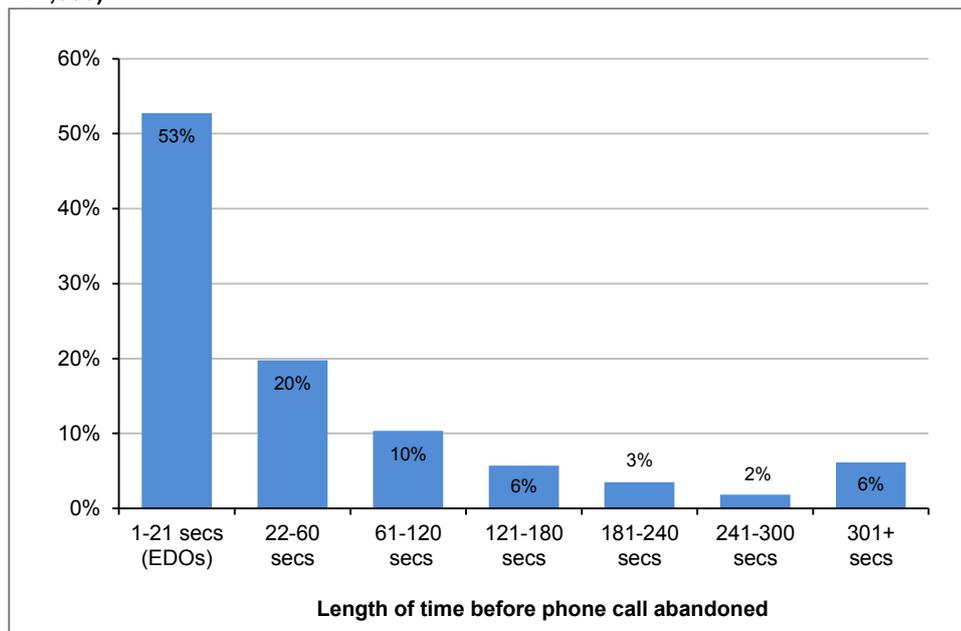
4. In addition to 15,886 emails received and responded to in 2015, 535 outreach emails were sent.

Adjusted response rates for phone – excluding early drop outs (EDOs)

A considerable proportion of attempts to contact Kids Helpline by phone are terminated by callers before the end of the 21 second mandatory wait message informing the caller of important privacy and call monitoring policies. These calls are not available to counsellors to answer and are referred to as *early drop outs* (EDOs).

Figure 1 shows the length of time before phone calls to Kids Helpline were abandoned in 2015. It indicates that over half (53%) of all unanswered calls were abandoned in the first 21 seconds before they became available to counsellors to be answered.

Figure 1. Length of time until phone call to Kids Helpline abandoned showing early drop outs (EDOs) – 2015 (N = 121,080)¹



1. Data presented in this table are sourced from KHL phone system database. The number of unanswered calls reported in this figure is slightly greater than that reported in Table 1 due to the use of summary and unit record data in Table 1 and Figure 1 respectively.

In assessing service demand and responsiveness, it can be helpful to adjust response rates to take account of the calls that were effectively out of scope to be answered by counsellors. Table 2 presents adjusted response rates for phone contacts over the three year period taking into account EDOs. It shows that:

- when EDOs are excluded, the response rate in each year rises steadily (from 58% to 75% in 2015, for example), and
- while the unadjusted response rate has remained the same over the three years (Table 1, bottom row), the adjusted response rate has gradually increased – from 70% in 2013 to 75% in 2015.

Table 2. Adjusted response rates for phone taking into account early drop outs – by year¹

Year	All attempts	All answered	Response rate	Early drop outs (EDO)	Adjusted attempts	Adjusted response rate
2013	318,633	189,394	59%	48,554	270,079	70%
2014	300,200	173,752	58%	54,341	245,859	71%
2015	290,767	169,802	58%	64,459	226,308	75%

1. Data presented in this table are sourced from KHL phone system database.

2.1.2 Wait times

Another measure of service demand and responsiveness is the length of time that clients wait to be answered by counsellors. Table 3 presents mean wait times for attempted and answered contacts for Kids Helpline's synchronous services – i.e. phone and web chat – from 2013 to 2015.

These data indicate a notable decrease in mean wait times for both answered and unanswered phone and web chat contacts between 2013 and 2015. The mean wait time for answered web chat contacts has more than halved from 2013 to 2015 (from 60 minutes to 24 minutes) while for answered phone contacts it has decreased by 30% (from 2:06 min:sec to 1:28 min:sec).

The percentage reduction in wait times from 2013 to 2015 is greater for web chat compared with phone (59% for answered web chat contacts c.f. 30% answered phone contacts and 49% for unanswered web chat contacts c.f. 25% unanswered phone contacts).

Table 3. Mean wait-times for attempted and answered contacts – phone and web chat contacts by year¹

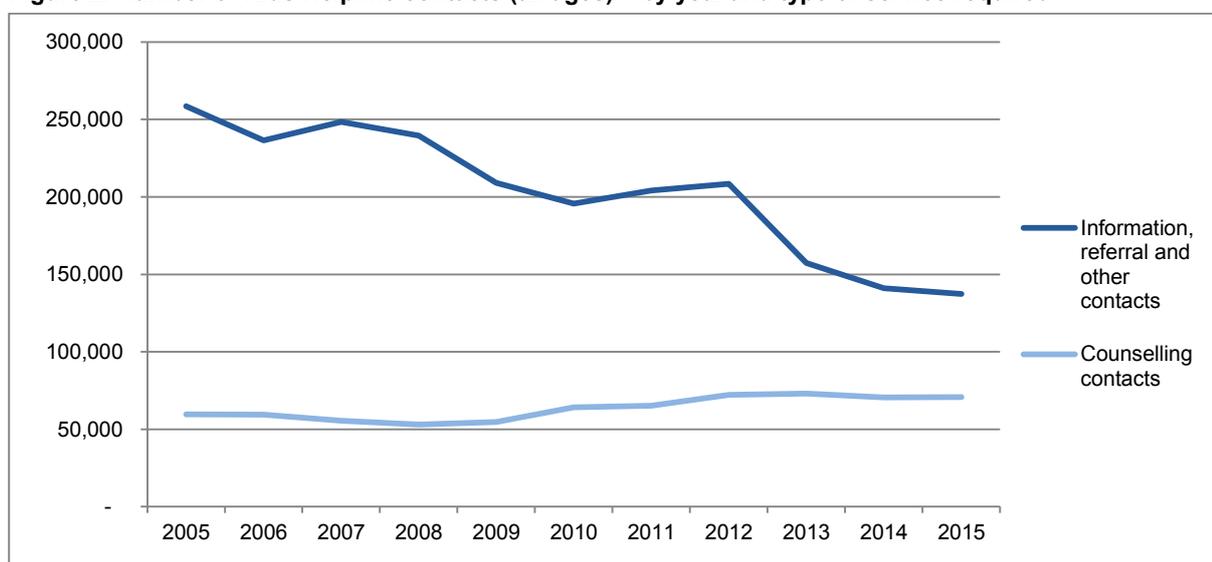
Medium of contact	Mean wait time Answered contacts (min:sec)				Mean wait time Unanswered contacts (min:sec)			
	2013	2014	2015	% change	2013	2014	2015	% change
Phone								
	2:06	1:54	1:28	-30%	1:50	1:37	1:22	-25%
Web chat								
	59:44	41:04	24:22	-59%	36:43	25:28	18:50	-49%

1. Data presented in this table are sourced from KHL phone system and web chat system databases.

2.1.3 Demand for service type – counselling vs. non-counselling contacts

To understand shifts in demand for service type, it is necessary to look beyond the last three years. Figure 2 shows the number of Kids Helpline contacts received each year over the last decade by the type of service response required by the child or young person – counselling or non-counselling.

Figure 2. Number of Kids Helpline contacts (all ages) – by year and type of service required¹

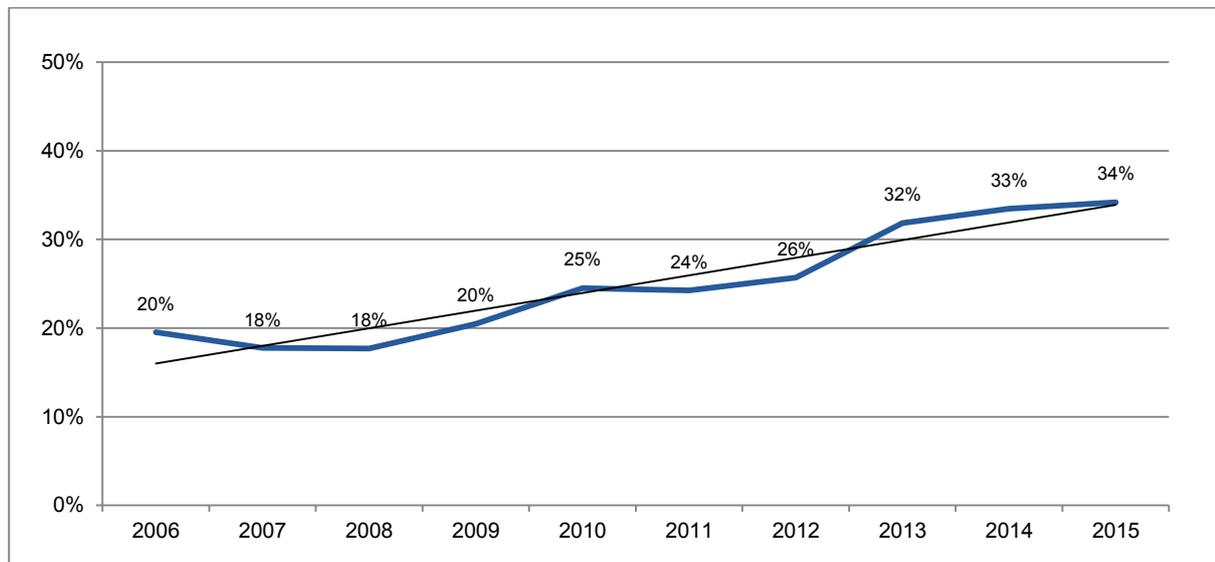


1. Data presented in this figure are sourced from KHL's Record-a-Contact database.

It shows that overall contacts have reduced during this period (from 295,885 in 2006 to 208,027 in 2015). The decrease is among those seeking information, referral and other non-counselling responses, however (from 236,532 in 2006 to 137,302 in 2015). Counselling contacts have actually grown slightly during this period (from 59,353 to 70,725) and have increased quite significantly as a proportion of all contacts received in a year, as shown in Figure 3. Figure 3 reveals that over the last decade the proportion of contacts requiring counselling responses has steadily increased from 18% in 2007 to 34% in 2015.

As will be apparent in the following subsection on session length, the implications of this shift in demand are considerable because counselling responses require on average a much greater investment of counsellor resources.

Figure 3. Proportion of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years seeking counselling support – by year¹

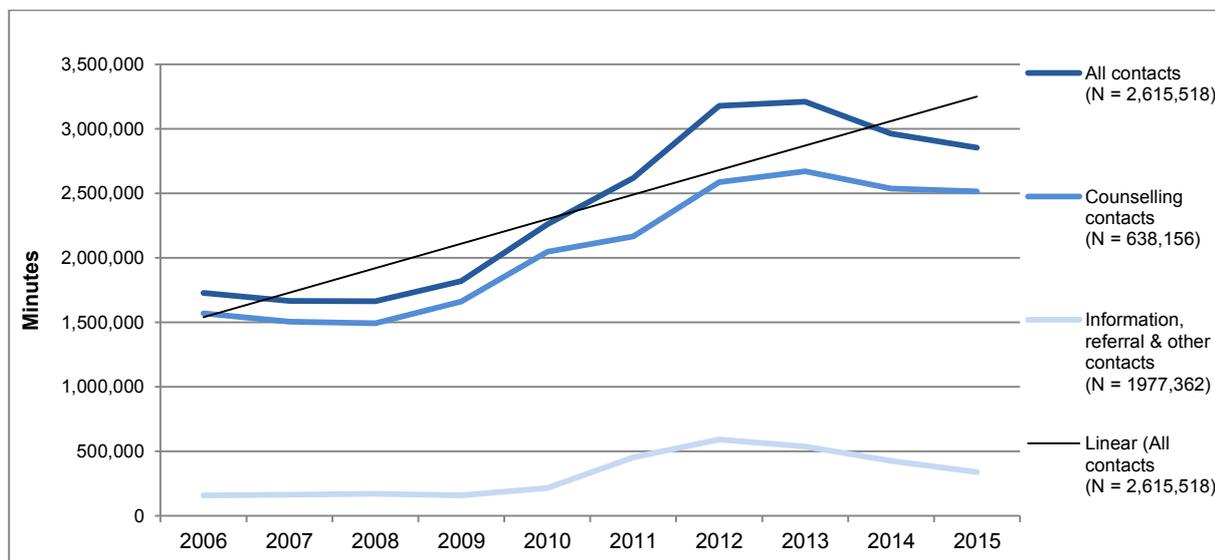


1. Data presented in this figure are sourced from KHL's Record-a-Contact database.

2.1.4 Direct client contact time

Direct client contact time is another measure of service demand. To understand shifts in this aspect of demand, it is again necessary to look beyond the last three years. Figure 4 shows the total amount of time spent by counsellors each year in direct contact with children and young people for the last decade. It also breaks down the time spent by the type of service required by the child or young person – counselling responses compared with non-counselling responses.

Figure 4. Direct contact time in minutes – by year: all Kids Helpline contacts, counselling contacts and information, referral and other contacts¹

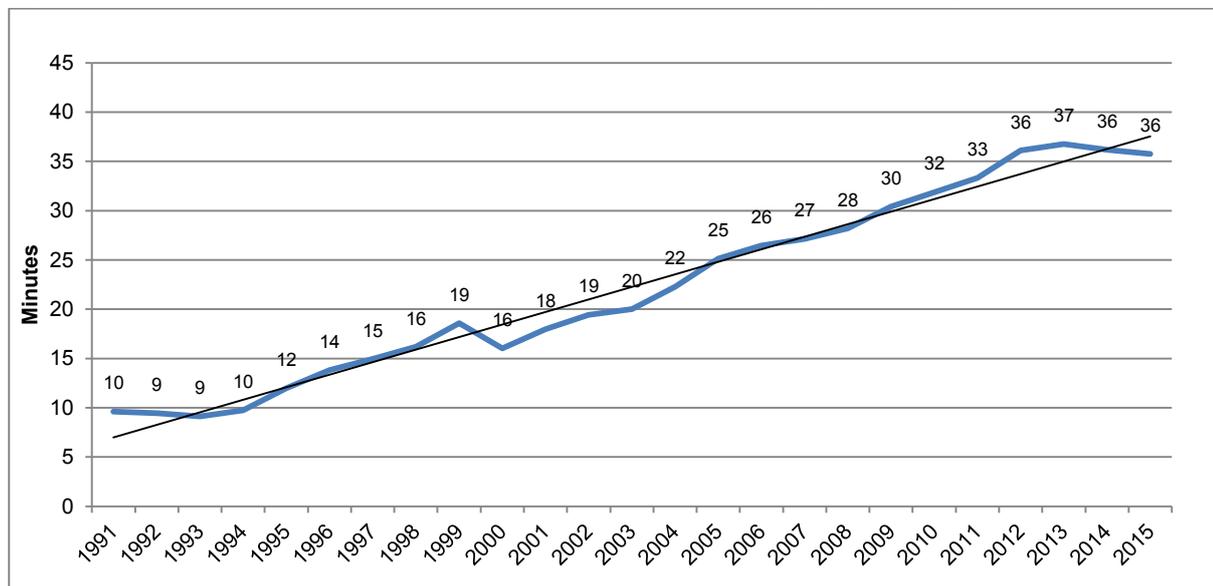


1. Data presented in this figure are sourced from KHL's Record-a-Contact database.

As indicated by the trend line, the overall time spent in client contact has steadily increased over the last decade, notwithstanding the overall reduction in the number of contacts responded to. Figure 4 also highlights the comparative time burden of counselling and non-counselling contacts. Counselling contacts made up just 24% of all contacts during the ten year period while constituting 87% of the total time counsellors spent with clients.

The increase in time spent in direct contact with clients is in part due to the growing proportion of contacts requiring a counselling response (Figure 3) and the fact that the mean duration of counselling sessions has steadily increased over time. Figure 5 shows the mean length of counselling sessions in minutes each year over the full 25 years Kids Helpline has been in operation. The trend line indicates a continuous and steady increase in counselling session duration. In 1991, counselling sessions were 10 minutes on average. In 2015 they were 36 minutes on average.

Figure 5. Mean session duration in minutes – Kids Helpline counselling contacts by year¹



1. Data presented in this figure are sourced from KHL's Record-a-Contact database.

2.1.5 Summary

The data presented in this section suggest there have been significant shifts over the last decade in the demand for the counselling and support service. Notwithstanding an overall reduction contacts being responded to, the overall time invested by the service in responding to the needs of children and young people is growing steadily owing to the fact that an increasing number and proportion of clients are requiring more intensive counselling-type responses and because the average length of these counselling sessions is steadily increasing as well.

Longer-term shifts in the types of issues that children and young people are contacting the service about help to account for the increasing session lengths. These shifts in client need are described further in Chapter 6 which presents 25 year trend data in relation to the main concerns of children and young people contacting the service.

Short-term improvements in service responsiveness are also evident from the data in this chapter: clients are waiting a shorter time to be responded to each year and (adjusted) response rates have also been steadily improving.

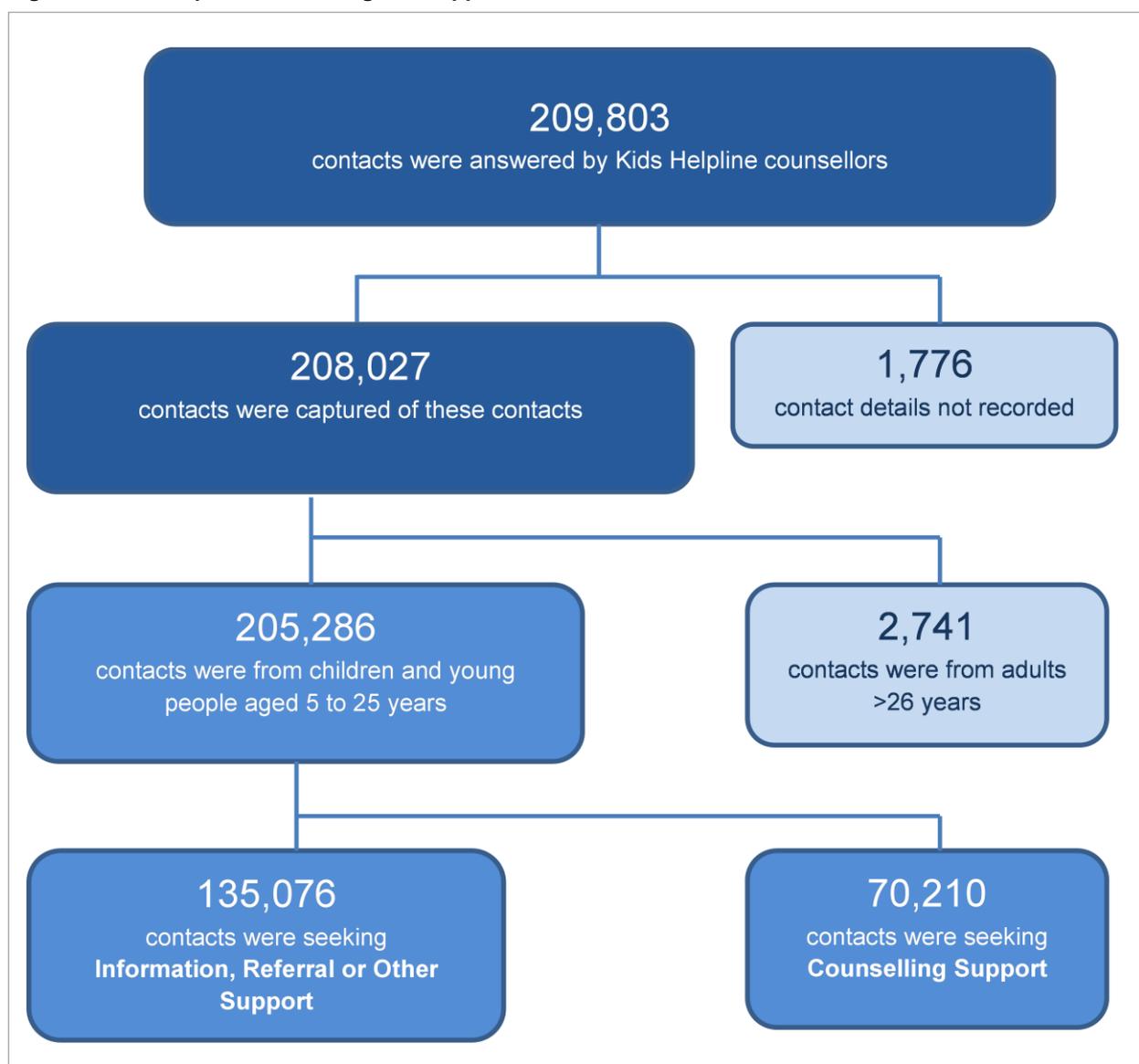
2.2 Who contacted the service

When children and young people contact the counselling and support service, counsellors record information about the child or young person in a dedicated database. The data presented throughout the rest of this chapter come from this *Record-a-Contact* database.

As shown in Figure 6, the Record-a-Contact database contains records for 208,027 of the 209,803 contacts received by Kids Helpline counselling and support service in 2015. Each year a small number of contacts fail to be recorded by counsellors, either due to technical issues (system outages), counsellor error or because they were non-client contacts (i.e. contacts from external professionals). In 2015, there were 1,776 of these (<1%). Of those contacts that were recorded, 2,741 (1%) were received from adults aged 26 years and over (outside Kids Helpline's target age group) and 205,286 were received from children and young people aged 5-25 years.

The data presented in this chapter exclusively pertain to these 205,286 contacts. Most of the chapter focuses in further on the sub-population of children and young people who contacted Kids Helpline for counselling support ($N = 70,210$) as more complete and detailed information is available about the characteristics and concerns of this sub-population. Initially, however, we will describe the characteristics of the broader population of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years.

Figure 6. Kids Helpline counselling and support service contacts in 2015



2.2.1 Client characteristics in 2015

Table 4 summarises demographic and other characteristics of contacts from children and young people aged 5-25 years responded to by Kids Helpline in each year from 2013 to 2015. Key observations about client characteristics in 2015 include:

- *Gender.* Seven out of 10 contacts responded to (71%) were from females while three in 10 (29%) were from males. In 2015, Kids Helpline introduced a new category for gender – *intersex, trans and gender diverse*. A total of 619 contacts were recorded in this gender category.
- *Age.* More than half (55%) of all contacts responded to were aged 13-18 years, one in three (33%) were 19-25 years, and one in eight (12%) were aged 5-12 years.
- *Cultural background.* Where information was available on cultural background (23% of all contacts), 4% were identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), 34% as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and 63% as neither ATSI nor CALD.
- *Location.* Contacts were received from all states and territories. As shown in Table 5, the proportional state breakdown of Kids Helpline contacts in 2015 closely approximates that for the Australian population aged 5-25 years estimated at 30 June 2014. There is a slight over-representation from New South Wales and a slight under-representation from Western Australia and Queensland. Where the child or young person's postcode was known (29% of contacts), most were living in Major Cities (69%), one in five (21%) were living in Inner Regional localities, and one in 10 (10%) were living in Outer Regional or Remote localities.
- *Type of support relationship.* Where the contacts' relationship with the service was recorded (38% of all contacts), roughly one third (35%) were first time contacts and two thirds (65%) were occasional contacts or receiving support on an ongoing basis.
- *Medium of contact.* Four out of five contacts (81%) were received by phone, while 11% were received by web chat and 8% by email.

2.2.2 Trends in client characteristics

Table 4 also summarises characteristics of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline in 2013 and 2014 for the purpose of analysing trends in contact characteristics over the short-term. Key observations include the following:

- *Gender.* There has been a slight decrease in the proportion of females contacting the service (77% in 2013 to 71% in 2015) and a corresponding increase in the proportion of males (23% in 2013 to 29% in 2015).
- *Age.* There has been a slight increase in the proportion of contacts from children aged 5-12 (from 8% in 2013 to 12% in 2015) with a corresponding decrease in the proportion of contacts aged over 12 years.
- *Cultural background.* There has been a moderate increase in the proportion of contacts known to be from CALD backgrounds (24% in 2013 to 34% in 2015) with a decrease in those known to be neither CALD nor Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- *Relationship with KHL.* There has been an increase in the proportion of first time contacts (from 28% in 2013 to 34% in 2015) and a corresponding decrease in occasional or ongoing support contacts (72% to 66%).
- Other client characteristics have remained relatively stable over the period.

Table 4. Characteristics of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by year¹

Contact characteristics	2013 (N = 209,004)		2014 (N = 209,004)		2015 (N = 205,286)	
	n	col. %	n	col. %	n	col. %
Gender²						
Female	112,217	77%	98,552	74%	89,952	71%
Male	33,125	23%	34,143	26%	35,930	28%
Intersex, Trans & Gender Diverse	-	-	-	-	619	<1%
Total	145,342	100%	132,695	100%	126,501	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	82,089		76,309		78,785	
Age group						
5-12 years	9,371	8%	11,176	10%	12,824	12%
13-18 years	63,281	56%	60,515	56%	56,857	55%
19-25 years	40,505	36%	35,777	33%	33,946	33%
Total	113,157	100%	107,468	100%	103,627	100%
<26 but age unknown	114,274		101,536		101,659	
Cultural background³						
Aboriginal &/or TSI	1,724	3%	1,443	3%	1,642	4%
CALD	14,941	24%	16,699	32%	15,800	34%
Neither ATSI nor CALD	45,356	73%	34,453	66%	29,288	63%
Total	62,021	100%	52,595	100%	46,730	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	165,410		156,409		158,556	
State						
ACT	2,207	1%	2,397	1%	2,979	2%
NSW	74,877	36%	68,674	36%	70,977	37%
NT	1,091	1%	881	0%	1,420	1%
QLD	45,999	22%	37,973	20%	35,027	18%
SA	12,111	6%	14,372	7%	13,855	7%
TAS	4,997	2%	3,799	2%	4,325	2%
VIC	52,689	25%	48,950	26%	46,711	24%
WA	14,624	7%	14,627	8%	15,628	8%
Total	208,595	100%	191,673	100%	190,922	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	18,836		17,331		14,364	
Remoteness						
Major Cities	44,125	67%	41,894	69%	41,554	69%
Inner Regional	15,315	23%	12,655	21%	12,734	21%
Outer Regional/Remote	6,598	10%	6,306	10%	6,348	10%
Total	66,038	100%	60,855	100%	60,636	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	161,393		148,149		144,650	
Relationship with KHL						
First contact	24,311	28%	23,669	29%	26,877	35%
Occasional/Ongoing support	62,030	72%	57,794	71%	50,539	65%
Total	86,341	100%	81,463	100%	77,416	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	141,090		127,541		127,870	
Medium of contact						
Phone	185,517	82%	170,020	81%	166,225	81%
Web chat	18,175	8%	20,469	10%	23,391	11%
Email	23,739	10%	18,515	9%	15,670	8%
Total	227,431	100%	209,004	100%	205,286	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

Table 5. Proportional state breakdown of Kids Helpline contacts in 2015 compared with the Australian population aged 5-25 years estimated at 30/6/2014

State	Kids Helpline contacts 2015		Australian residents aged 5-25 years ¹	
	<i>n</i>	col. %	<i>N</i> ('000)	col. %
ACT	2,979	2%	107	2%
NSW	70,977	37%	2,011	32%
NT	1,420	1%	75	1%
QLD	35,027	18%	1,332	21%
SA	13,855	7%	439	7%
TAS	4,325	2%	135	2%
VIC	46,711	24%	1,562	25%
WA	15,628	8%	704	11%
Total	190,922	100%	6,365	100%
<i>Unknown</i>	14,364			

1. Population data from Australian Bureau of Statistics

2.3 Type of help-seeking

2.3.1 Counselling and non-counselling contacts in 2015

As shown in Figure 6, Kids Helpline contacts fall into two main sub-populations based on the kind of assistance they are seeking – those seeking counselling support and those seeking information, referral or some other type of non-counselling support. In 2015, 70,210 (or 34%) of all contacts aged 5-25 years were seeking counselling support while 135,076 (or 66%) were seeking information, referral or other support.

Table 6 summarises and compares the demographic and other characteristics of counselling and non-counselling contacts. The use of column percentages allows for easy comparison between counselling and non-counselling contacts with regard to each client characteristic.

Key observations include the following:

- *Data reliability issues.* A large proportion of missing data is apparent, particularly in relation to non-counselling contacts, and with regard to cultural background, remoteness of locality, state of residence and client relationship with Kids Helpline. Caution is therefore required in the use and interpretation of this data.
- *Gender.* The gender imbalance in contacts was greater for counselling contacts than for non-counselling contacts. While males made up more than a third (38%) of non-counselling contacts, they made up just one fifth (21%) of counselling contacts.
- *Age group.* Amongst counselling contacts, 13-18 year olds comprised three out of every five contacts (60%) and contacted twice as commonly as 19-25 year olds (28%). Amongst non-counselling contacts, 13-18 year old made up a smaller relative proportion (47%) while 19-25 year olds comprised a larger relative proportion (41%).
- *Remoteness.* Counselling contacts, compared with non-counselling contacts, were more likely to be living in Major Cities than non-counselling contacts.
- *Relationship with KHL.* Amongst counselling contacts, just under two fifths (38%) are first time contacts; however, among non-counselling contacts, one fifth (19%) are first time contacts and the remaining four-fifths (81%) receive either occasional or ongoing support.
- *Other demographic characteristics* appear to be fairly consistent across the two sub-populations in 2015.

2.3.2 Types of assistance sought by non-counselling contacts

Children and young people who contact Kids Helpline for support other than counselling can be grouped as follows according to the type of assistance or engagement they are seeking:

- *Non-conversational contacts.* These include silent contacts, hang ups, noise without verbal content, and in the web chat context, opening a session but not responding.
- *Re-engagement or re-connection.* These are contacts from clients who have previously contacted Kids Helpline. They may include general or specific feedback and thanks, reporting-in with a regular counsellor without discussing any specific issue or concern, arranging for a particular counsellor to contact them, and/or challenging or testing access arrangements put in place by Kids Helpline.
- *Other ways of engaging.* These contacts include engaging in resourceful, inventive, unusual, challenging or creative ways, such as joking, singing, giggling, swearing, playing recordings, role-playing, story-telling, and communicating sexual themes with unknown agendas.
- *Engage, connect, conversation.* These contacts are where a child or young person contacts through conversation and no issues or concerns are presented. They may include general conversations, conversations about the counselling process, sharing personal news, exploring ideas, and therapeutic and/or strength-based conversations.
- *Requesting a referral.* These are contacts where the client requests information or contact details for other support services, not related to a particular problem.
- *Asks for information/resources.* These contacts are for information or resources that are not related to a particular problem or issue, such as requests for information about Kids Helpline competitions or campaigns. They exclude referral requests.

Table 6. Characteristics of 2015 Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by type of help-seeking¹

Contact characteristics		Counselling contacts (N = 70,210)		Information/referral & other contacts (N = 135,076)		All contacts (N = 205,286)	
		n	col. %	n	col. %	n	col. %
Gender							
	Female	53,749	79%	36,203	62%	89,952	71%
	Male	14,022	21%	21,908	38%	35,930	28%
	Intersex, Trans & Gender Diverse	461	1%	158	<1%	619	<1%
	Total	68,232	100%	58,269	100%	126,501	100%
	Unknown	1,978		76,807		78,785	
Age group							
	5-12 years	8,150	13%	4,674	12%	12,824	12%
	13-18 years	38,021	60%	18,836	47%	56,857	55%
	19-25 years	17,639	28%	16,307	41%	33,946	33%
	Total	63,810	100%	39,817	100%	103,627	100%
	<26 but age unknown	6,400		95,259		101,659	
Cultural background²							
	Aboriginal &/or TSI	677	3%	965	4%	1,642	4%
	CALD	8,395	35%	7,405	32%	15,800	34%
	Neither ATSI nor CALD	14,754	62%	14,534	63%	29,288	63%
	Total	23,826	100%	22,904	100%	46,730	100%
	Unknown	46,384		112,172		158,556	
State							
	ACT	1,300	2%	1,679	1%	2,979	2%
	NSW	20,269	33%	50,708	39%	70,977	37%
	NT	360	1%	1,060	1%	1,420	1%
	QLD	12,616	20%	22,411	17%	35,027	18%
	SA	4,279	7%	9,576	7%	13,855	7%
	TAS	1,217	2%	3,108	2%	4,325	2%
	VIC	16,979	27%	29,732	23%	46,711	24%
	WA	5,011	8%	10,617	8%	15,628	8%
	Total	62,031	100%	128,891	100%	190,922	100%
	Unknown	8,179		6,185		14,364	
Remoteness							
	Major Cities	24,235	72%	17,319	64%	41,554	69%
	Inner Regional	6,183	18%	6,551	24%	12,734	21%
	Outer Regional/Remote	3,173	9%	3,175	12%	6,348	10%
	Total	33,591	100%	27,045	100%	60,636	100%
	Unknown	36,619		108,031		144,650	
Relationship with KHL							
	First contact	24,416	38%	2,461	19%	26,877	35%
	Occasional/Ongoing support	40,007	62%	10,532	81%	50,539	65%
	Total	64,423	100%	12,993	100%	77,416	100%
	Unknown	5,787		122,083		127,870	

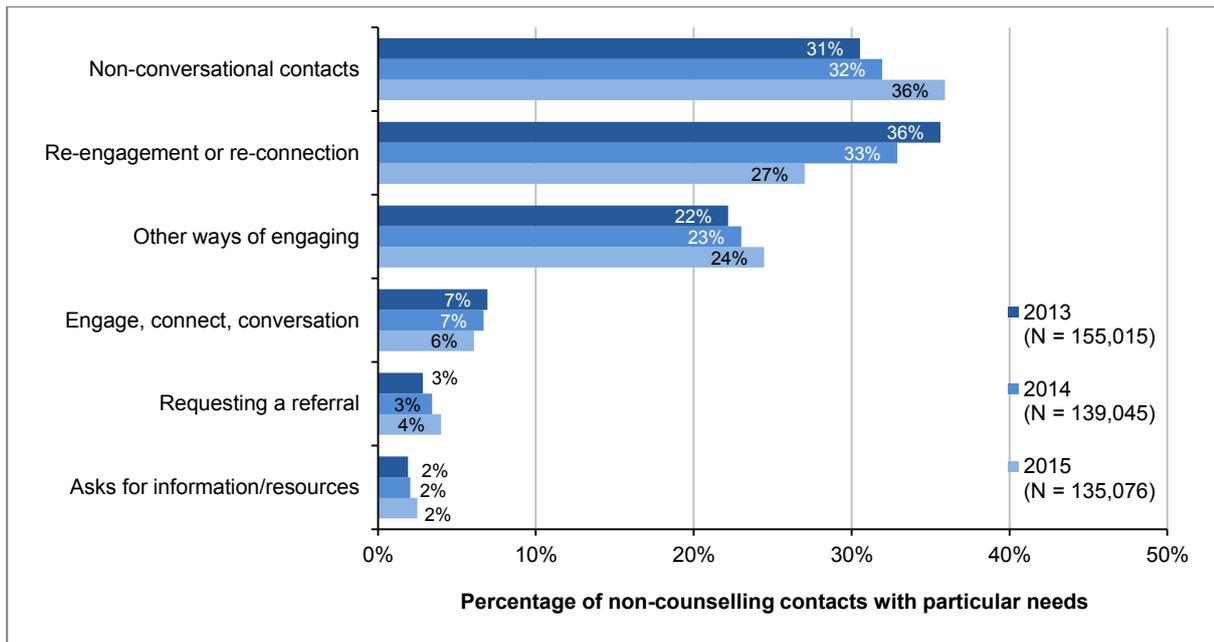
1. Where column percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

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

Figure 7 outlines the proportional frequency with which these types of non-counselling help-seeking applied in 2015 and compares that with 2013 and 2014. Key observations from the data are as follows:

- The most common type of non-counselling contact in 2015 was non-conversational exchanges accounting for more than one in three non-counselling contacts (36%).
- There has been an increase in the proportion of non-counselling contacts engaging in non-conversational exchanges, from 31% in 2013 to 36% in 2015.
- There has been a decrease in the proportion of non-counselling contacts re-engaging or re-connecting with the service, from 36% in 2013 to 27% in 2015.
- The proportional frequency of other forms of help-seeking or engagement has remained constant over the short-term.

Figure 7. Type of assistance sought by non-counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by year



2.3.3 Trends in help-seeking

As noted in the relevant section on service demand (2.1.3) and as represented visually in Figure 3, there has been a gradual but notable increase in the proportion of Kids Helpline contacts requiring counselling support (from 18% in 2007 to 34% in 2015) and a corresponding decrease in the proportion of those requiring information, referral or other support (from 82% in 2007 to 66% in 2015).

2.4 Medium of contact

Kids Helpline counselling and support service provides three media by which clients can engage counselling or other support – phone, web chat and email. Understanding children and young people’s current and changing communication preferences is important for service planning, as noted in the section on service demand (2.1). This section goes further, however, and explores patterns in children and young people’s communication preferences – for example, whether or not particular subgroups prefer to engage via particular media and whether or not there is a relationship between young people’s type of help-seeking and their preferred communication medium. Such information will be useful for developing new and targeting existing support services more effectively to different subgroups of vulnerable children and young people.

2.4.1 Phone, web chat and email contacts in 2015

Table 7 shows the proportion of different sub-populations of Kids Helpline contacts who engaged by phone, web chat or email in 2015. The use of row percentages allows comparison between subgroups, like males and females, in their relative use of different contact media.

Key observations from these data include the following:

- *Gender.* Females were less likely than males to contact by phone (65% c.f. 85%) and more likely than males to contact by web chat (22% c.f. 9%) and email (13% c.f. 6%).
- *Age.* There were notable differences in contacting preferences by age group. Compared with younger age groups, 19-25 year olds were more likely to contact by phone (84% c.f. 57% for 13-18 year olds and 70% for 5-12 year olds) and less likely to contact by email (3% c.f. 14% and 15%). Compared with those older and younger in age, 13-18 year olds were more likely to contact by web chat (29% c.f. 15% of 5-12 year olds and 13% of 19-25 year olds).
- *Cultural background.* Contacts known to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in background were more likely than those known to be of other cultural backgrounds to contact by phone (93% c.f. 84% for CALD contacts and 87% for non-ATSI/CALD contacts). They were less likely than those from other cultural backgrounds to contact by either email or web chat. Substantial missing data, small subpopulations and the greater likely influence of repeat contacts on percentage frequencies in this context undermine the reliability of these observations, however.
- *Remoteness.* Those outside Major Cities appeared to contact by phone slightly more frequently than those in Major Cities (70% in Outer Regional/Remote localities and 66% in Inner Regional localities compared with 56% in Major Cities). Again, substantial missing data, relatively small subpopulations and the greater likely influence of repeat contacts on percentage frequencies in this context undermine the reliability of these observations.
- *Type of support relationship.* First time or occasional contacts were more likely than contacts receiving ongoing support to contact by web chat (27% c.f. 16%) and slightly less likely to contact either by phone (57% c.f. 63%) or email (16% c.f. 21%).
- *Type of help-seeking.* Children and young people’s preferred medium of contact was strongly associated with whether or not they were seeking counselling services. Contacts seeking counselling support compared with contacts seeking information, referral or other support, were less likely to contact via phone (61% c.f. 92%) and more likely to contact by web chat (23% c.f. 5%) or by email (16% c.f. 3%).

Table 7. Characteristics of 2015 Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by medium of contact¹

Contact characteristics		Phone (N = 166,225)		Web chat (N = 23,391)		Email (N = 15,670)		All contacts (N = 205,286)	
		n	row %	n	row %	n	row %	n	row %
Gender									
	Female	58,798	65%	19,434	22%	11,720	13%	89,952	100%
	Male	30,558	85%	3,386	9%	1,986	6%	35,930	100%
	Intersex, Trans & Gender Diverse	344	56%	202	33%	73	12%	619	100%
	Total	89,700	71%	23,022	18%	13,779	11%	126,501	100%
	<i>Unknown</i>	76,525	97%	369	0%	1,891	2%	78,785	100%
Age group									
	5-12 years	9,009	70%	1,925	15%	1,890	15%	12,824	100%
	13-18 years	32,458	57%	16,510	29%	7,889	14%	56,857	100%
	19-25 years	28,490	84%	4,308	13%	1,148	3%	33,946	100%
	Total	69,957	68%	22,743	22%	10,927	11%	103,627	100%
	<26 but age unknown	96,268	95%	648	1%	4,743	5%	101,659	100%
Cultural background²									
	Aboriginal &/or TSI	1,524	93%	52	3%	66	4%	1,642	100%
	CALD	13,242	84%	1,356	9%	1,202	8%	15,800	100%
	Neither ATSI/CALD	25,566	87%	2,385	8%	1,337	5%	29,288	100%
	Total	40,332	86%	3,793	8%	2,605	6%	46,730	100%
	<i>Unknown</i>	125,893	79%	19,598	12%	13,065	8%	158,556	100%
State									
	ACT	2,343	79%	560	19%	76	3%	2,979	100%
	NSW	61,498	87%	7,319	10%	2,160	3%	70,977	100%
	NT	1,328	94%	64	5%	28	2%	1,420	100%
	QLD	29,665	85%	3,817	11%	1,545	4%	35,027	100%
	SA	11,933	86%	1,387	10%	535	4%	13,855	100%
	TAS	3,699	86%	408	9%	218	5%	4,325	100%
	VIC	38,846	83%	6,029	13%	1,836	4%	46,711	100%
	WA	13,435	86%	1,493	10%	700	4%	15,628	100%
	Total	162,747	85%	21,077	11%	7,098	4%	190,922	100%
	<i>Unknown</i>	3,478	24%	2,314	16%	8,572	60%	14,364	100%
Remoteness									
	Major Cities	23,196	56%	15,029	36%	3,329	8%	41,554	100%
	Inner Regional	8,354	66%	3,214	25%	1,166	9%	12,734	100%
	Outer Regional/Remote	4,425	70%	1,337	21%	586	9%	6,348	100%
	Total	35,975	59%	19,580	32%	5,081	8%	60,636	100%
	<i>Unknown</i>	130,250	90%	3,811	3%	10,589	7%	144,650	100%
Relationship with KHL									
	First contact	17,303	64%	6,921	26%	2,653	10%	26,877	100%
	Occasional/Ongoing support	29,025	57%	12,057	24%	9,457	19%	50,539	100%
	Total	46,328	60%	18,978	25%	12,110	16%	77,416	100%
	<i>Unknown</i>	119,897	94%	4,413	3%	3,560	3%	127,870	100%
Type of help-seeking									
	Counselling contact	42,581	61%	16,481	23%	11,148	16%	70,210	100%
	Information/Referral/ Other contact	123,644	92%	6,910	5%	4,522	3%	135,076	100%
	Total	166,225	81%	23,391	11%	15,670	8%	205,286	100%

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

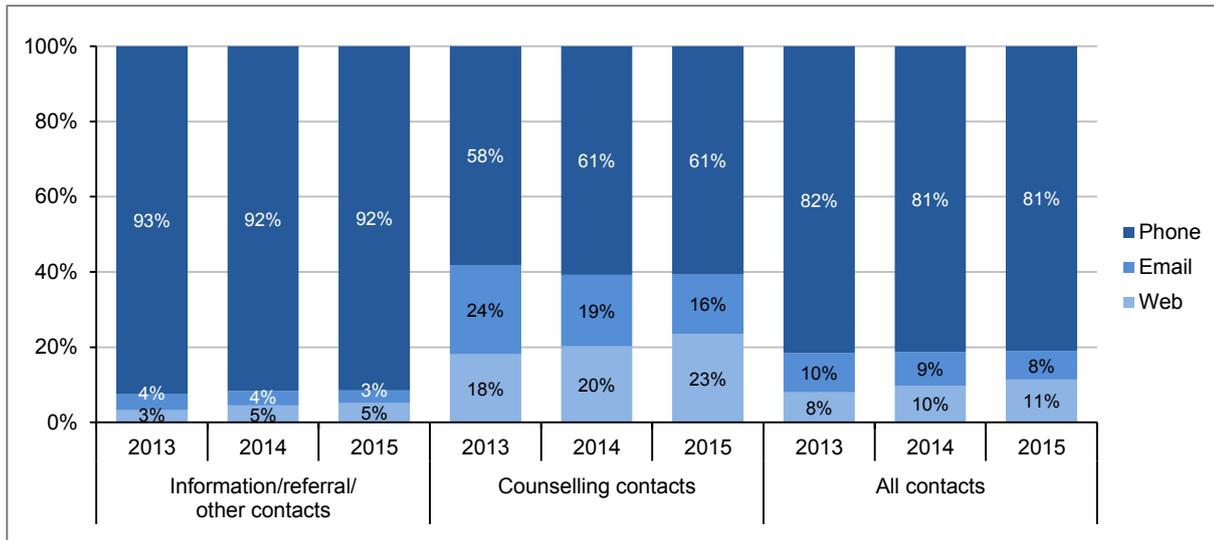
2. TSI = Torres Strait Islander. CALD = culturally and linguistically diverse. ATSI = Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

2.4.2 Trends in medium of contact

Figure 8 shows the proportion of Kids Helpline contacts engaging with the service via each medium over the last three years according to whether or not they were seeking counselling or non-counselling types of support. Key observations include the following:

- Counselling contacts compared with non-counselling contacts, are more likely to engage via online media (web chat and email).
- For both counselling and non-counselling contacts there has been a slight increase in engagement via web chat and a decrease in engagement by email. These trends are more evident among counselling contacts.

Figure 8. Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – medium of contact by year and type of help-seeking¹



1. Population sizes as follows: Information/referral/other contacts – $N(2013) = 155,015$, $N(2014) = 139,045$, $N(2015) = 135,076$. Counselling contacts – $N(2014) = 72,416$, $N(2015) = 69,959$, $N(2015) = 70,210$. Where stacked bar percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

Figure 9 provides longer-term trend analysis for counselling contacts' medium of preference. It shows a gradual decrease in preference for phone engagement among counselling contacts since email and web chat options were introduced (in 1999 and 2000 respectively), a gradual but steady increase in web engagement, and an increase in email engagement up until 2012 after which point email engagement has declined slightly.

Figure 9. Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – medium of contact by year

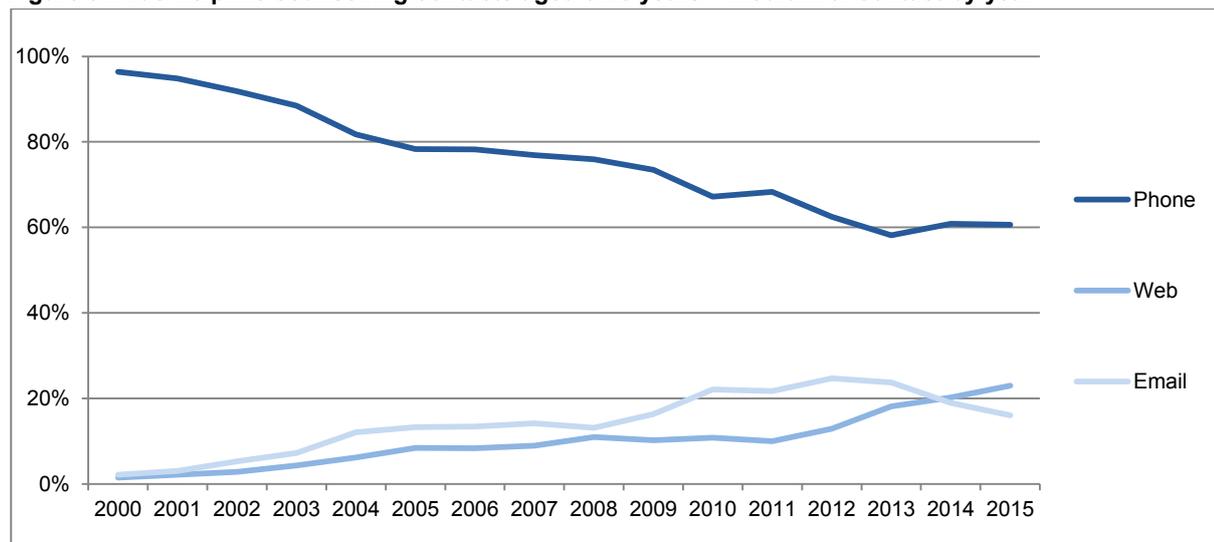


Table 8 presents a breakdown of the characteristics of Kids Helpline contacts according to their medium of engagement from 2013 to 2015. Two key observations to be taken from Table 8 are:

- Almost every subgroup of the Kid Helpline population listed on the left hand side of the table (i.e. both genders, all age groups, all localities, etc.) except contacts known to be Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, have slightly or moderately increased their preference for web chat over the last three years while reducing their preference for email-based contact.
- Preference for engagement by phone remained constant for most subgroups, although it decreases slightly during the period for contacts from Major Cities (63% to 56%) and among female contacts (69% to 65%), while increasing among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander contacts (83% to 93%).

Table 8. Characteristics of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by medium of contact and year¹

Contact characteristics	Medium	2013 (N = 227,431)		2014 (N = 209,004)		2015 (N = 205,286)	
		n	col. %	n	col. %	n	col. %
Gender²							
Female	Phone	77,263	69%	66,456	67%	58,798	65%
	Web	15,671	14%	17,247	18%	19,434	22%
	Email	19,283	17%	14,849	15%	11,720	13%
Male	Phone	28,432	86%	29,403	86%	30,558	85%
	Web	2,223	7%	2,876	8%	3,386	9%
	Email	2,470	7%	1,864	5%	1,986	6%
Age group							
5-12 years	Phone	6,478	69%	7,997	72%	9,009	70%
	Web	1,123	12%	1,447	13%	1,925	15%
	Email	1,770	19%	1,732	15%	1,890	15%
13-18 years	Phone	36,745	58%	35,821	59%	32,458	57%
	Web	13,013	21%	14,674	24%	16,510	29%
	Email	13,523	21%	10,020	17%	7,889	14%
19-25 years	Phone	34,124	84%	30,142	84%	28,490	84%
	Web	3,470	9%	3,643	10%	4,308	13%
	Email	2,911	7%	1,992	6%	1,148	3%
Cultural background³							
Aboriginal &/or TSI	Phone	1,428	83%	1,369	95%	1,524	93%
	Web	157	9%	29	2%	52	3%
	Email	139	8%	45	3%	66	4%
CALD	Phone	12,251	82%	14,080	84%	13,242	84%
	Web	1,019	7%	1,150	7%	1,356	9%
	Email	1,671	11%	1,469	9%	1,202	8%
Neither ATSI nor CALD	Phone	39,034	86%	29,800	86%	25,566	87%
	Web	2,736	6%	2,257	7%	2,385	8%
	Email	3,586	8%	2,396	7%	1,337	5%
Remoteness							
Major Cities	Phone	27,779	63%	25,349	61%	23,196	56%
	Web	10,660	24%	12,547	30%	15,029	36%
	Email	5,686	13%	3,998	10%	3,329	8%
Inner Regional	Phone	10,432	68%	8,601	68%	8,354	66%
	Web	2,680	17%	2,674	21%	3,214	25%
	Email	2,203	14%	1,380	11%	1,166	9%
Outer Regional/Remote	Phone	4,545	69%	4,155	66%	4,425	70%
	Web	1,093	17%	1,193	19%	1,337	21%
	Email	960	15%	958	15%	586	9%
Relationship with KHL							
First contact	Phone	15,234	63%	15,122	64%	17,303	64%
	Web	5,484	23%	5,694	24%	6,921	26%
	Email	3,593	15%	2,853	12%	2,653	10%
Occasional/Ongoing support	Phone	34,889	56%	33,710	58%	29,025	57%
	Web	10,649	17%	11,619	20%	12,057	24%
	Email	16,492	27%	12,465	22%	9,457	19%

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

2. Only two gender categories are shown in this trend analysis as the third gender category (intersex, trans, gender diverse) has only been used since 2015.

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

2.5 Most common concerns of children and young people who received counselling

During 2015, Kids Helpline counsellors responded to 70,210 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 needs of young Australians today.

Each time a child or young person contacts the service, counsellors can record up to four different concerns of the child or young person, taking these from a classification inventory of 39 different concern or problem types. Each concern type has a specific set of subcategories, which allow for more in-depth capturing of children and young people's concerns.

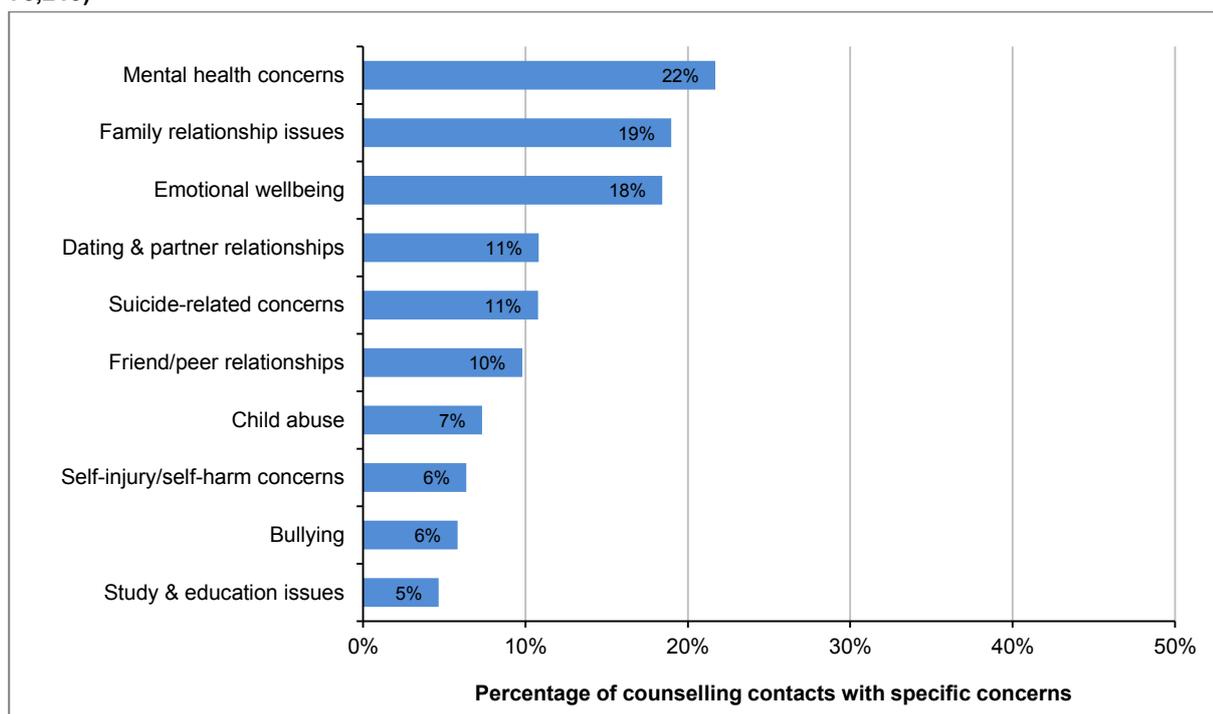
This section examines the most frequently recorded concerns of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline for counselling in 2015. The analysis is provided initially for all counselling contacts and then by various demographic or other client characteristics, including medium of contact, gender, age group, cultural background, remoteness, and type of support relationship with the counselling and support service.

2.5.1 All counselling contacts

Current period

Figure 10 shows the frequency with which counsellors recorded specific concerns of children and young people contacting the service for counselling support in 2015.

Figure 10. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2015 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years (N = 70,210)¹



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

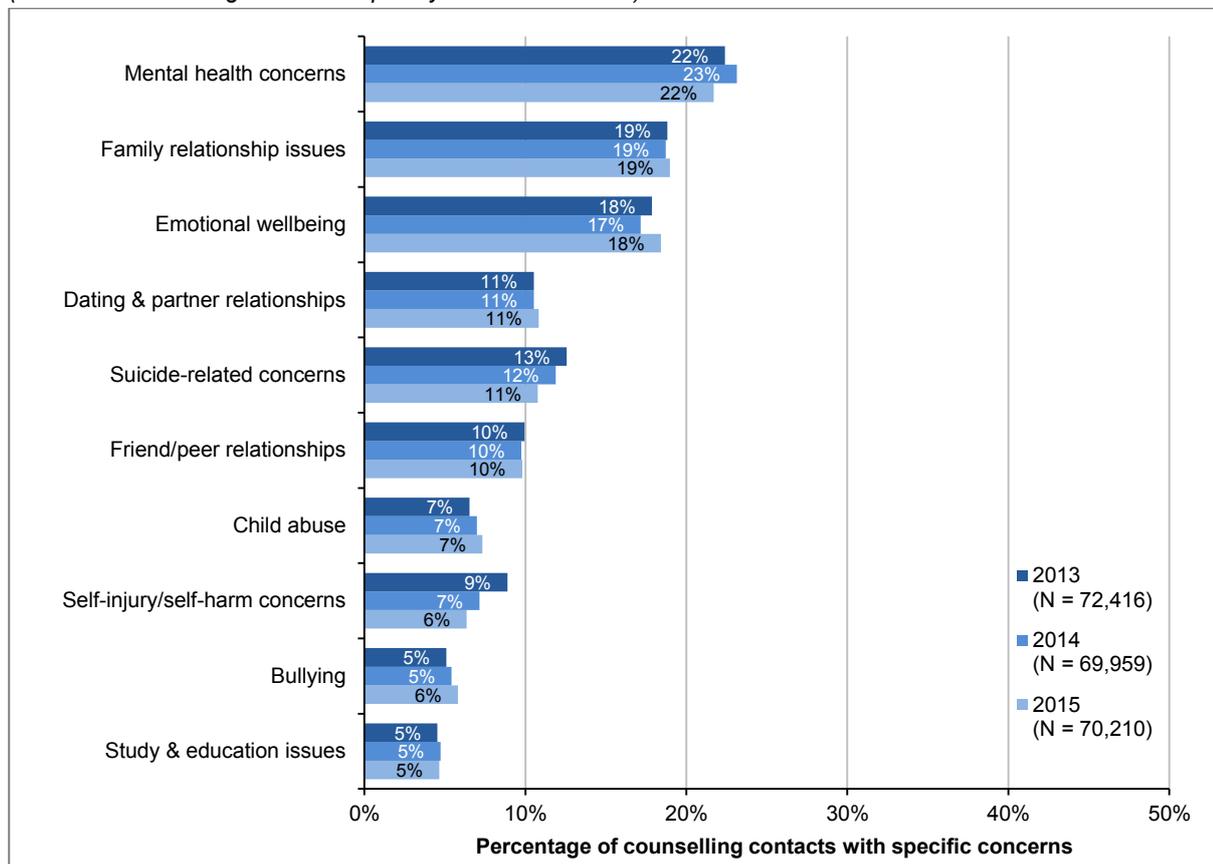
- Just over one in five counselling contacts (22%) raised concern with counsellors about mental health – their own or that of another person.
- Just less than one in five had family relationship concerns (19%) or concerns about emotional wellbeing (18%).
- One in 10 had concerns about dating or partner relationships (11%), suicide-related issues (11%), or friend/peer relationships (10%).
- Approximately one in 15 had concerns about child abuse (7%), self-injury (6%), or bullying (6%), and
- One in 20 (5%) indicated concerns about study and education.

Trend analysis

Figure 11 shows the 10 most common concerns of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline for counselling support over the last three years to consider any short-term trends in the concerns of counselling contacts.

- What is apparent from the data is that the frequency with which children and young people are contacting Kids Helpline about all these issues has stayed the same over the short term.

Figure 11. Most frequently recorded concerns of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by year (sorted in descending order of frequency of 2015 concerns)¹



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

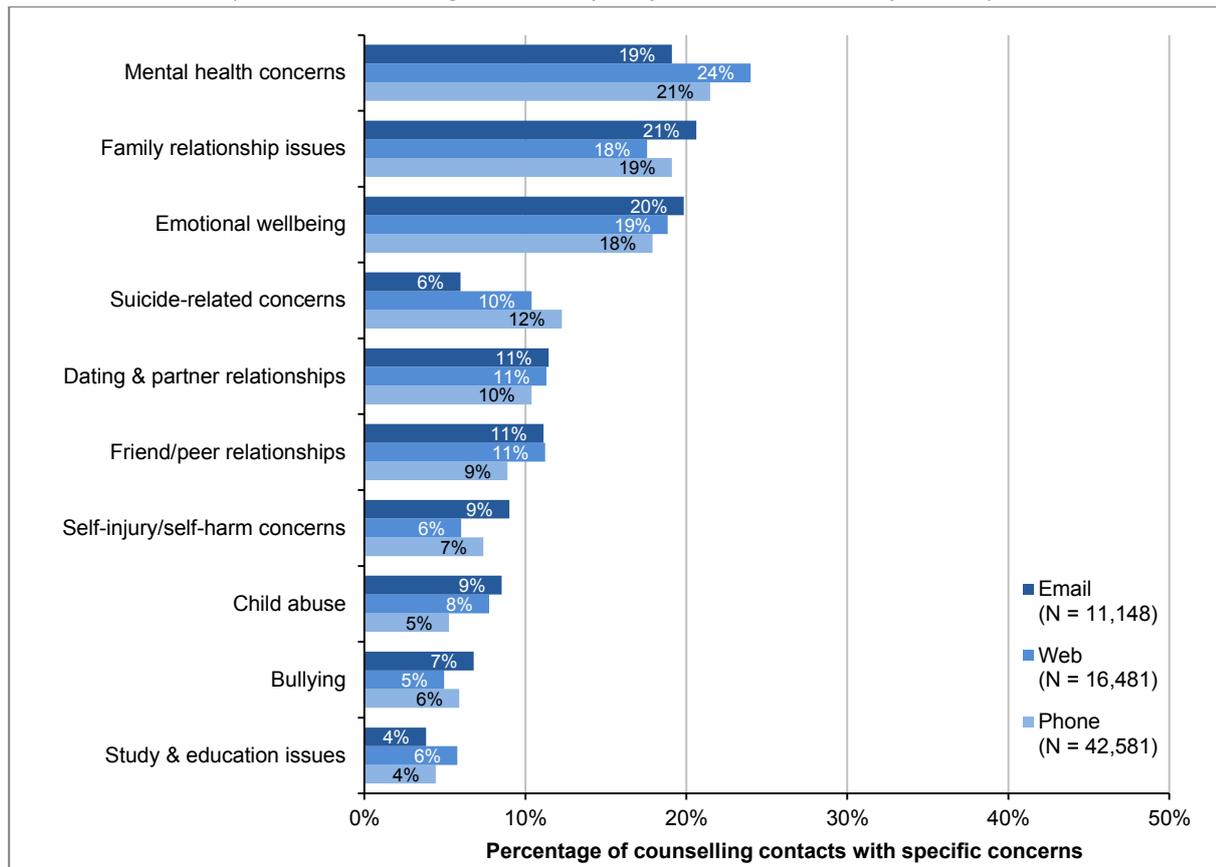
2.5.2 By medium of contact

As observed in section 2.4, there have been shifts in children and young people's preference for receiving counselling support via phone, web chat and email over the recent past. In light of this, it is valuable to consider whether counselling contacts engaging with the service via particular media are more likely to contact about particular issues.

Figure 12 compares the proportional frequency with which specific concerns were raised by counselling contacts in 2015 according to their chosen medium of contact. Key observations from the data include the following:

- There are few differences in the proportional frequency with which particular concerns were raised with counsellors depending on the medium of contact and these differences in frequency are all relatively small in size.
- Children and young people who contacted via web chat were slightly more likely than those who contacted by other media, especially email, to discuss concern about mental health issues (24% for web chat c.f. 21% for phone and 19% for email).
- Children and young people who contacted by either phone or web chat were slightly more likely than those who contacted by email to discuss suicide-related issues (12% for phone and 10% for web chat c.f. 6% for email).
- Children and young people who contacted by email were slightly more likely to contact about child abuse concerns than those who contacted by phone (9% c.f. 5%).

Figure 12. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2015 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by medium of contact (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2015)¹



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

2.5.3 By age group

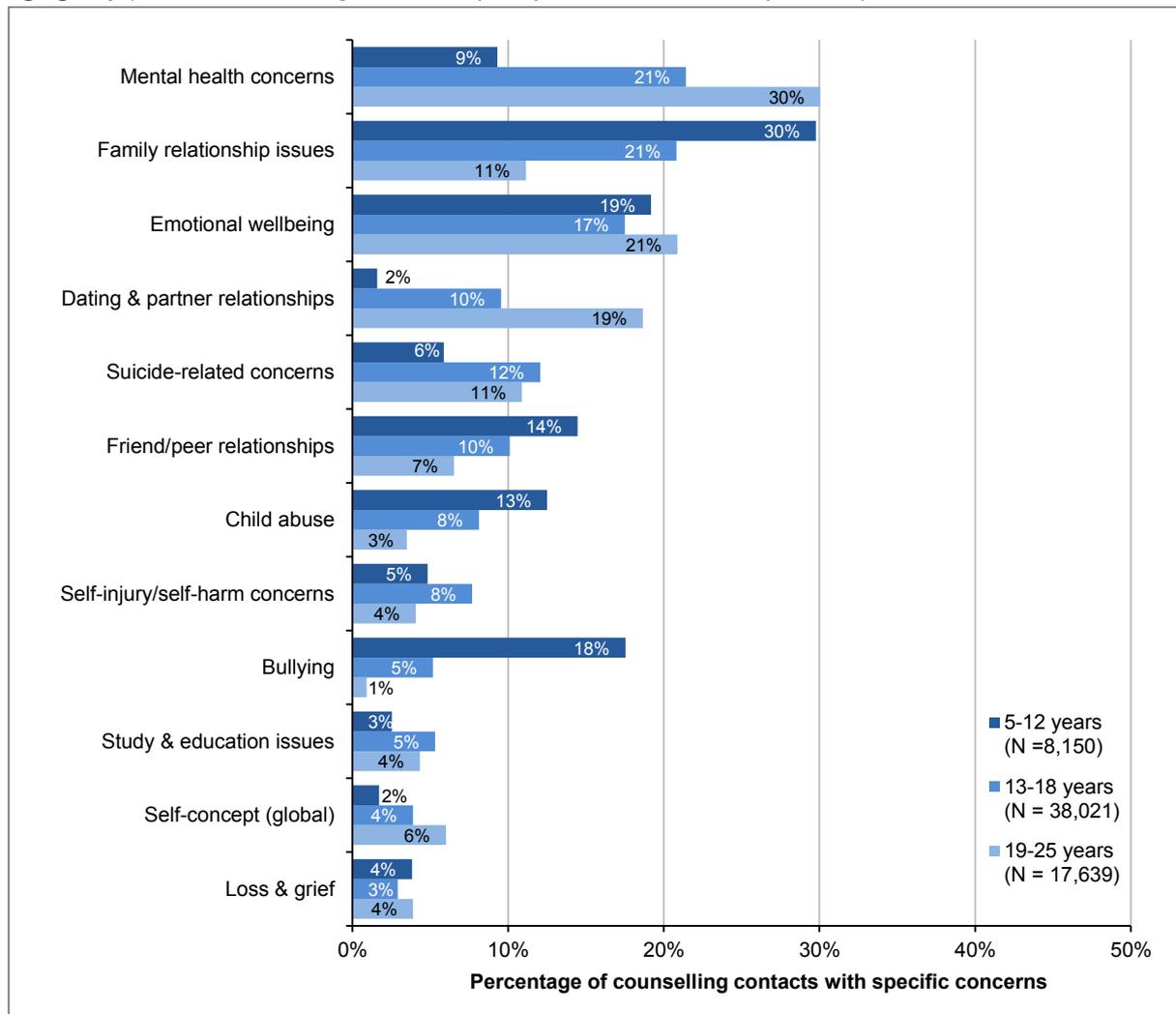
Kids Helpline targets a broad age range – from 5-25 years. This age range spans numerous developmental periods and life stages. Understanding the ways in which age influences the help-seeking needs of children and young people contacting the service is valuable both in terms of developing age-appropriate responses but also in undertaking targeted policy advocacy where required.

For the purposes of identifying broad patterns in age-related concern, the population was divided into three age groups corresponding to *kids* (5-12 year olds), *teens* (13-18 year olds) and *young adults* (19-25 year olds). Figure 13 compares the proportional frequency with which the 12 most common concerns of 2015 counselling contacts were raised according to age group.

Key observations from Figure 13 include the following:

- *Age has a major influence on children and young people's concerns.* The frequency with which almost every concern was raised by counselling contacts in 2015 can be seen to be related to the age group of contacts; in many cases the age-related differences in frequency are moderate to large.

Figure 13. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2015 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by age group (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2015)¹



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

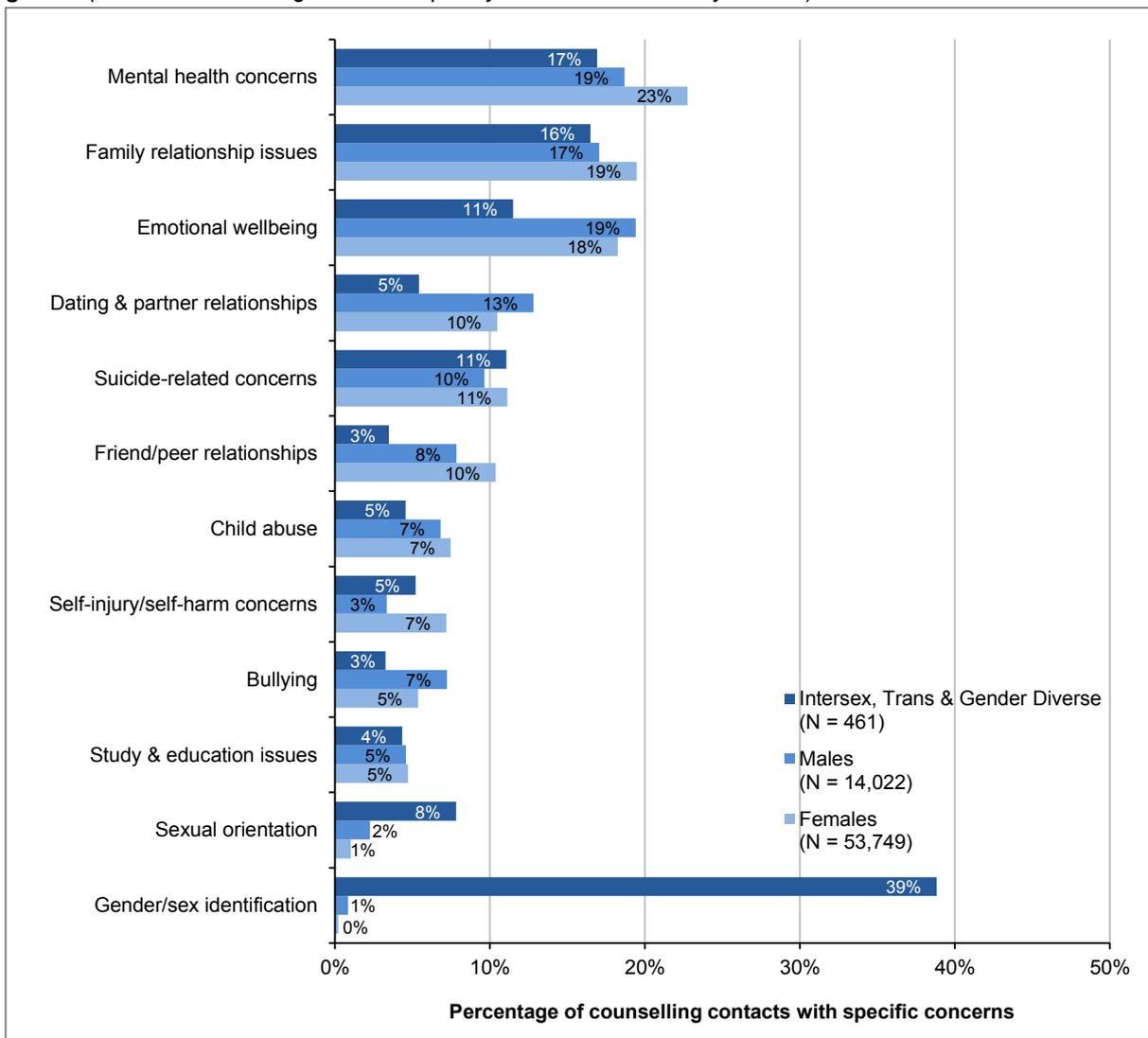
- *Mental health concerns.* Concern with mental health increases sharply with age. While one in 10 contacts (9%) aged 5-12 years raised concern about mental health, three in ten contacts (30%) aged 19-25 years were concerned about mental health issues.
- *Family relationship issues.* Concern about family relationships decreases sharply by age. One in three contacts (30%) aged 5-12 years raised concern about family relationships while roughly one in ten (11%) aged 19-25 years contacted with concerns about family relationships.
- *Dating and partner relationships.* Concern with dating and partner relationships increases with age. Only one in 50 contacts (2%) aged 5-12 years raised concern in this area compared with roughly one in five (19%) contacts aged 19-25.
- *Suicide-related concerns.* Concern about suicide was twice as common among contacts aged 13-18 years (12%) and 19-25 years (11%) than it was among younger contacts (6% for 5-12 year olds).
- *Friend and peer relationships.* Concern about friend and peer relationships decreases gradually with age with 14% of contacts aged 5-12 years raising concern with counsellors about these types of relationships compared with 7% of contacts aged 19-25 years.
- *Child abuse.* Concerns about child abuse decrease with age. Child abuse was a concern of 13% of contacts aged 5-12 years compared with a concern of 3% of contacts aged 19-25 years.
- *Self-injury concerns.* Contacts aged 13-18 years were almost twice as likely to raise concerns about self-injury (8%) compared with either younger contacts (5%) or older contacts (4%).

- *Bullying.* Bullying was primarily a concern of contacts aged 5-12 years, with close to one in five contacts (18%) in this age group raising concern about bullying in 2015. Concern with bullying decreases to 5% among teenage contacts and to 1% among young adult contacts.
- *Self-concept.* Concern with issues related to self-concept appeared to increase slightly with age from 2% of contacts aged 5-12 years to 6% of contacts aged 19-25 years.

2.5.4 By gender

Figure 14 compares the proportional frequency with which concerns were raised by counselling contacts in 2015 according to their gender. In 2015, Kids Helpline introduced a third gender category in response to the growing numbers of contacts who identify as neither male nor female. This gender category is *intersex, trans and gender diverse*.

Figure 14. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2015 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by gender (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2015)¹



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

Key observations from the data include the following:

- There are a number of differences in the frequency with which particular concerns were raised with counsellors in 2015 depending on the gender of the child or young person. These differences are generally small in size between males and females but often moderate to large between those identifying as intersex, trans or gender diverse and those identifying as male and female.

- *Intersex, trans and gender diverse.* Children and young people identifying as intersex, trans or gender diverse were much more likely in 2015 to be contacting in relation to concern about gender/sex identification than males or females (39% c.f. 1% for males and <1% for females). They were also more likely than either males or females to contact about sexuality/sexual orientation issues (8% c.f. 2% for males and 1% for females). Owing to the relative frequency of their concern about these two issues, intersex, trans and gender diverse contacts were proportionately less likely than males or females to contact regarding all other issues, most notably mental health, emotional wellbeing, dating and partner relationships, friend and peer relationships, and bullying.

This analysis should not be interpreted to mean that children and young people who are intersex, trans, or gender diverse experience issues such as mental health difficulties or bullying less often than other children or young people. Rather, it indicates there are differences in the help-seeking behaviour of those who identify as intersex, trans or gender diverse compared with those who either identify as male or female or are assumed by counsellors to be male or female based on their self-presentation. Numerous studies indicate that individuals who are same-sex attracted or intersex, trans, or gender diverse are more likely than heterosexual or cisgendered individuals to experience mental health disorders (Roberts *et al.*, 2013; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2006; Meyer, 2003), suicidal thoughts and behaviours (Fitzpatrick *et al.*, 2005; LeVassuer *et al.*, 2013; Mueller *et al.*, 2015; Russell & Joyner, 2001; Stone *et al.*, 2014; Walls, Potter & Van Leeuwen, 2009) and/or bullying (LeVassuer *et al.*, 2013; Reisner *et al.*, 2015).

- *Males and females.* Differences in the most common concerns of males and females in 2015 are limited to two areas of concern – mental health and self-injury. Females were slightly more likely than males to contact about mental health issues (23% c.f. 19%) and also more likely than males to contact about concern with self-injury (7% c.f. 3%).

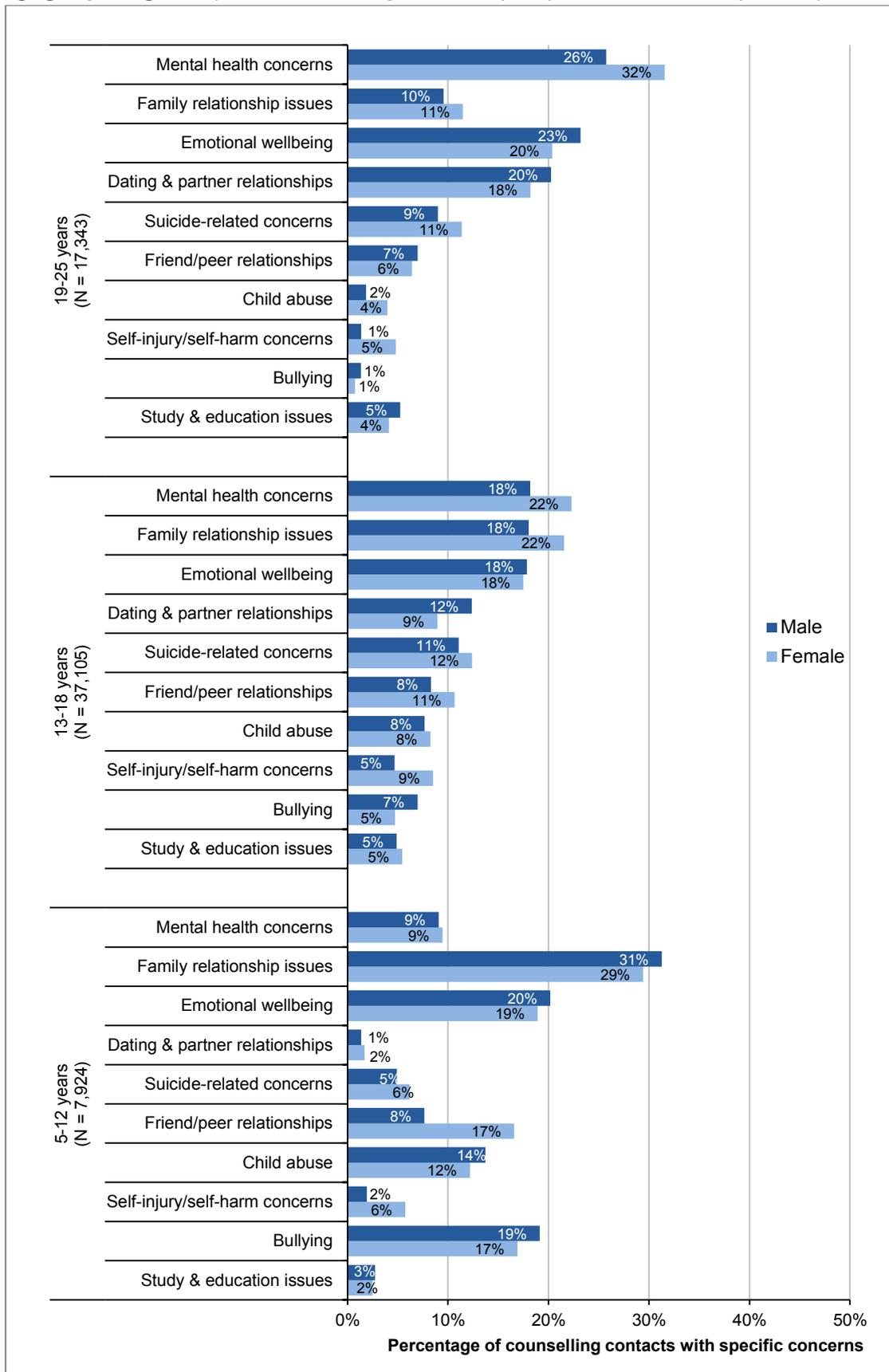
2.5.5 By age group and gender

Figure 15 presents the most frequently recorded concerns of Kids Helpline counselling contacts in 2015 by both age group and gender to see if gender differences in the concerns of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline vary according to age group. Due to the small number of contacts identifying as intersex, trans and gender diverse, it was necessary to exclude these contacts from the analysis.

Key observations from Figure 15 include:

- *Gender differences among 5-12 year old contacts.* Out of the 10 most common concerns analysed, two showed evidence of gender differences for this age group. Females were twice as likely than males in this age group to raise concerns about friend/peer relationships (17% c.f. 8%) and three times more likely to discuss self-injury issues (6% c.f. 2%).
- *Gender differences among 13-18 year old contacts.* Out of the 10 most common concerns of 2015, three indicated gender differences for this age group. Females were slightly more likely than males in this age group to raise concerns about mental health (22% c.f. 18%) and family relationship issues (22% c.f. 18%) and almost twice as likely to raise concern about self-injury (9% c.f. 5%).
- *Gender differences among 19-25 year old contacts.* Out of the 10 most common concerns of 2015, two indicated gender differences for this age group. Females were more likely than males in this age group to raise concerns about mental health (32% c.f. 26%) and self-injury (5% c.f. 1%).

Figure 15. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2015 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by age group and gender (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2015)¹



1. Up to four concerns per contact may be recorded. Accordingly, percentages for gender within an age category may sum to more than 100%. For 5 – 12 year old contacts, N (males) = 1,829, N (females) = 6,095. For 13 to 18 year old contacts, N (males) = 7,345, N (females) = 29,760. For 19 to 25 year old contacts, N (males) = 3,802, N (females) = 13,541.

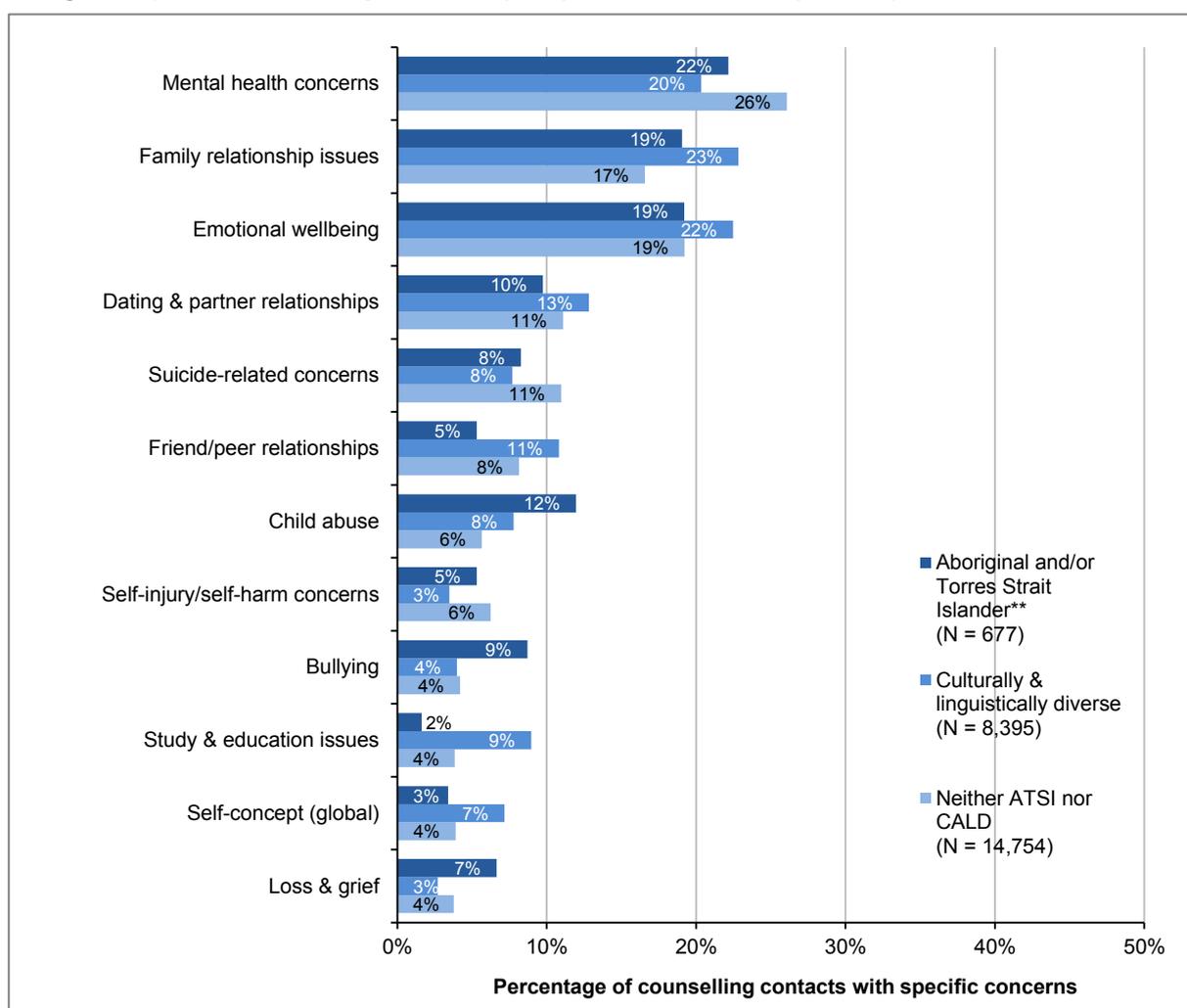
2.5.6 By cultural background

In terms of developing culturally sensitive and appropriate services for children and young people seeking help, it is valuable to consider the influence of cultural background on the kinds of issues for which children and young people seek counselling support.

Unfortunately, cultural background information is only available for approximately one third (34%) of counselling contacts in 2015 and there are likely to be biases associated with missing and known data (see Appendix). These factors will impact on the reliability of the cultural background analysis presented in this section and care therefore needs to be taken with how these data are interpreted and used.

Figure 16 compares the proportional frequency with which the 12 most common concerns were raised by counselling contacts in 2015 according to their cultural background – in particular, whether they were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), from other culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), or from neither ATSI nor CALD backgrounds (i.e. Caucasian Australian).

Figure 16. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2015 Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by cultural background (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2015)^{1, 2}



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

2. Interpret data for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander contacts with caution. These contacts comprise a very small subgroup of Kids Helpline counselling contacts. Moreover, the data presented pertain to *contacts*, not individuals, such that multiple contacts may be received from a single individual. Accordingly, the data presented here in relation to ATSI contacts may not be representative of the population of Kids Helpline service users from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Key observations from Figure 16 include the following:

- *Cultural background has a notable influence on children and young people's concerns.* The frequency with which eight of the 12 most common concerns were raised by counselling contacts in 2015 would appear to be related to the cultural background of contacts where known.
- *Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander counselling contacts.* ATSI contacts appeared more likely than either CALD or non-ATSI/CALD counselling contacts to raise concerns about:
 - child abuse (12% c.f. 8% or 6%)
 - bullying (9% c.f. 4% or 4%), and
 - grief and loss (7% c.f. 3% or 4%).
- *CALD counselling contacts.* CALD contacts appeared slightly or moderately more likely than either ATSI and/or non-ATSI/CALD contacts to raise concerns about:
 - family relationship issues (23% c.f. 19% or 17%)
 - dating and partner relationships (11% c.f. 7% for ATSI contacts)
 - friend and peer relationships (11% c.f. 5% or 8%)
 - study and education issues (9% c.f. 2% or 4%), and
 - self-concept issues (7% c.f. 3% or 4%).
- *Counselling contacts who were neither ATSI nor CALD.* Contacts who were known to be neither ATSI nor CALD were more likely than either ATSI or CALD contacts to raise concerns about mental health issues (26% c.f. 22% or 20%).

2.5.7 By remoteness

Kids Helpline services all localities across Australia. It is possible that distance from major cities will impact on the experiences and/or concerns of children and young people contacting the service. Understanding these differences is therefore important in delivering a quality service to children and young people across the continent.

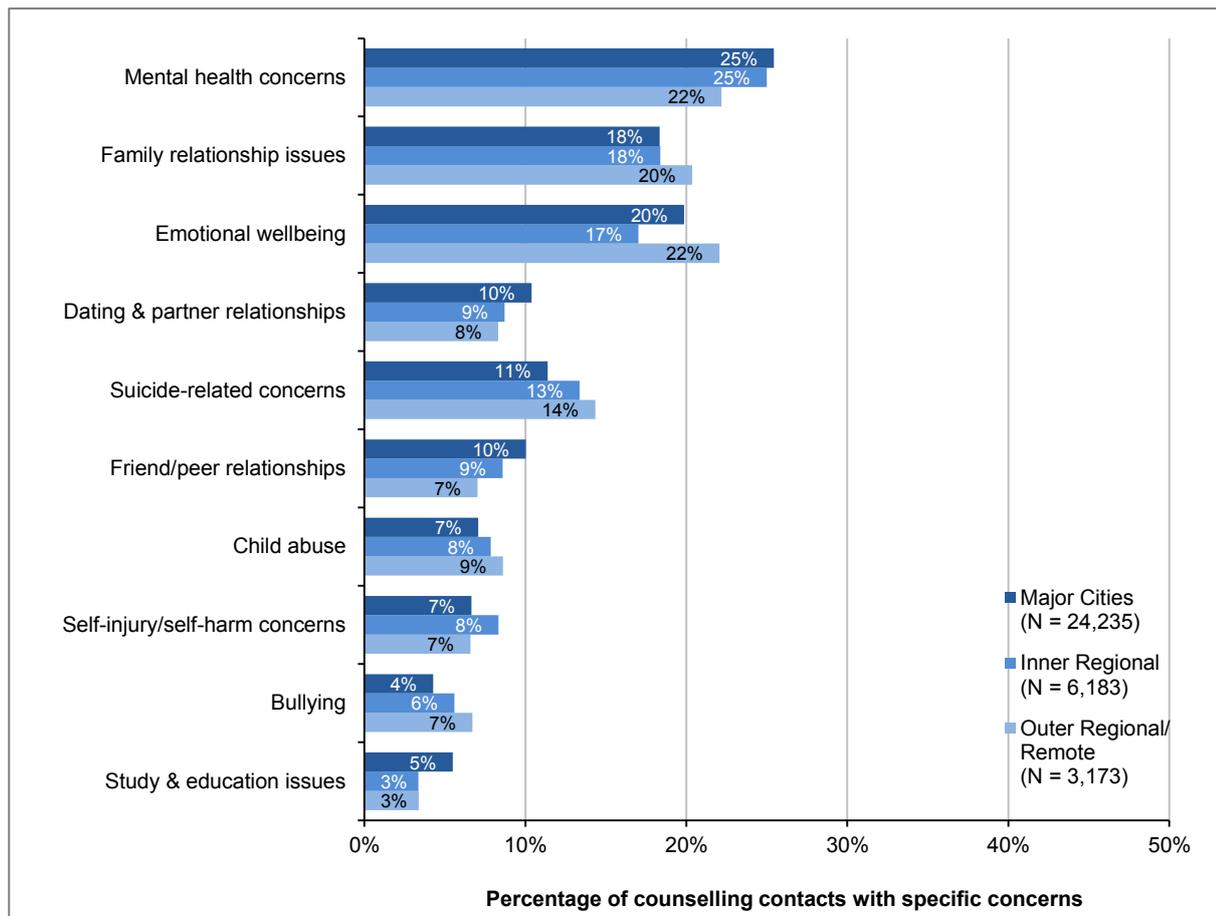
Unfortunately, locality information is only available for just under half (48%) of counselling contacts in 2015 and there are likely to be biases associated with missing and known data. These factors will impact on the reliability of the remoteness analysis presented in this section and care therefore needs to be taken with how these data are interpreted and used.

Figure 17 compares the proportional frequency with which concerns were raised by counselling contacts in 2015 according to their remoteness – in particular, whether they were living in “Major Cities”, in “Inner Regional” localities, or in “Outer Regional/Remote” localities. This remoteness classification system has been adapted from the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ Australian Geographical Standard (ASGS). See Appendix for more information.

Key observations from the data include the following:

- There is little difference apparent in the frequency with which the 10 most common concerns were raised by counselling contacts according to their remoteness in 2015.
- The one exception is that contacts living in Outer Regional areas, compared with those Inner Regional localities, were more likely to contact Kids Helpline about emotional wellbeing issues (22% c.f. 17%).
- Data reliability issues may account for the observed differences, however. Likewise, they may obscure actual differences.

Figure 17. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2015 Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by remoteness (sorted in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2015)¹



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

2.5.8 By type of support relationship with the service

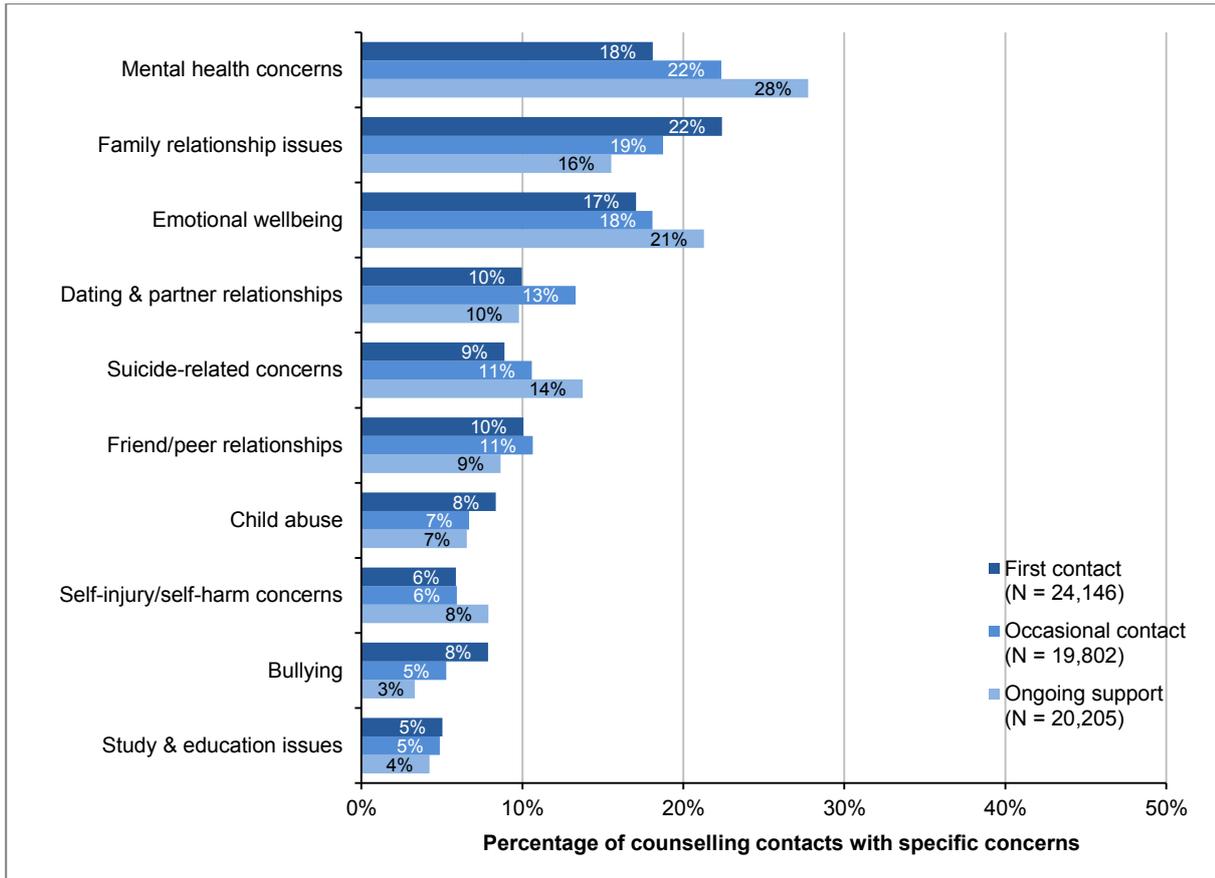
Counsellors classify counselling contacts according to the type of support relationship they have with Kids Helpline – in particular, whether they are a first time contact, an occasional contact or a contact who receives regular and ongoing support.

All children and young people are offered ongoing support if they would like this. However, as certain problems are more likely to be assisted by ongoing support, one would expect to see differences in the proportional frequency with which particular concerns are raised by counselling contacts according to their status as new contacts, occasional contacts or ongoing support contacts. Figure 18 presents this analysis and confirms the expected relationship.

Key observations from Figure 18 include the following:

- The frequency with which contacts received counselling support for five of the 10 most common concerns in 2015 appears to be related to how established or intensive their support relationship with the service is.
 - The more established or intensive the support relationship, the more likely contacts are to receive support with mental health, emotional wellbeing and suicide-related issues.
 - By contrast, counselling support for family relationship issues and bullying is more likely to be provided to first time and occasional contacts than to contacts receiving ongoing support.

Figure 18. Most frequently recorded concerns of 2015 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by type of support relationship with the service (in descending order of frequency of concerns nationally in 2015)¹



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

2.6 All concerns of children and young people who received counselling

The preceding section provided analysis of the most commonly reported concerns of children and young people contacting the Kids Helpline counselling and support service in 2015 and presented subgroup analysis to explore the priority concerns of 18 different subpopulations. Children and young people contact Kids Helpline about a very broad range of concerns, however, and focusing on the 10 or 12 most common concerns can obscure that diversity and the emergence of significant trends in other areas of client concern.

To address this issue, the current section reports the frequency with which every concern in the Kids Helpline's concern classification system was raised by counselling contacts in 2015 and compares this with the frequency with which the concern was raised in 2013 and 2014.

Table 9 presents this data. It shows:

- the complete list of 49 issues that counsellors use to classify the concerns that children and young people seek counselling for and the frequency with which each concern was raised in 2015
- trend data for the last three years to enable analysis of short-term changes in the proportional frequency with which different issues are being raised with counsellors, and
- aggregated totals for 11 "concern classes" which group a number of concerns together conceptually, thereby giving a sense of the overall frequency with which broad groupings of concern are arising in the population.

Counsellors can record up to four concerns each time a child or young person contacts the service. As a consequence:

- column percentages will sum to more than 100% for each year, and
- totals provided for concern class 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.

The key observation to be noted from the data in Table 9 is that the proportional frequency with which children and young people have been contacting Kids Helpline about all these different concerns and classes of concern is remarkably consistent over the short-term.

Table 9. Number and proportion of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years with particular concerns and classes of concern – by year¹

Concern and concern class	2013 (N = 72,416)		2013 (N = 72,416)		2015 (N = 70,210)	
	n	col. %	n	col. %	n	col. %
Mental health & emotional wellbeing	39,295	54.3%	37,147	53.1%	36,343	51.8%
Mental health concerns	16,217	22.4%	16,181	23.1%	15,230	21.7%
Emotional wellbeing	12,938	17.9%	12,007	17.2%	12,939	18.4%
Suicide-related concerns	9,103	12.6%	8,310	11.9%	7,562	10.8%
Self-injury/self-harm concerns	6,433	8.9%	5,006	7.2%	4,466	6.4%
Loss and grief	2,631	3.6%	2,479	3.5%	2,268	3.2%
Friends, peers, partners & dating	14,420	19.9%	13,810	19.7%	14,136	20.1%
Dating and partner relationships	7,620	10.5%	7,364	10.5%	7,598	10.8%
Friends/peer relationships	7,200	9.9%	6,824	9.8%	6,881	9.8%
Family relationships	13,631	18.8%	13,096	18.7%	13,329	19.0%
Child-parent relationships	9,517	13.1%	9,170	13.1%	9,439	13.4%
Other family relationships	3,085	4.3%	2,809	4.0%	2,848	4.1%
Changing family structures	1,641	2.3%	1,685	2.4%	1,714	2.4%
Parenting own children	285	0.4%	240	0.3%	193	0.3%
Identity & self-concept	6,692	9.2%	5,733	8.2%	5,371	7.6%
Self-concept (global)	4,123	5.7%	3,267	4.7%	2,835	4.0%
Body image	1,260	1.7%	1,066	1.5%	895	1.3%
Sexual orientation	906	1.3%	811	1.2%	923	1.3%
Gender/sex identification	221	0.3%	350	0.5%	434	0.6%
Disability-related concerns	262	0.4%	296	0.4%	347	0.5%
Cultural identity	200	0.3%	152	0.2%	139	0.2%
Violence & abuse (non-family)	5,817	8.0%	5,797	8.3%	5,913	8.4%
Bullying - school related	3,128	4.3%	3,275	4.7%	3,425	4.9%
Bullying - other	612	0.8%	563	0.8%	693	1.0%
Sexual assault or abuse (non-family)	1,208	1.7%	1,115	1.6%	854	1.2%
Dating and partner violence	425	0.6%	427	0.6%	517	0.7%
Harassment and assault (non-sexual)	364	0.5%	321	0.5%	309	0.4%
Sexual harassment	230	0.3%	220	0.3%	215	0.3%
Child abuse & family violence	4,730	6.5%	4,897	7.0%	5,147	7.3%
Physical abuse	2,270	3.1%	2,359	3.4%	2,654	3.8%
Sexual abuse	1,164	1.6%	1,179	1.7%	992	1.4%
Emotional abuse	948	1.3%	1,123	1.6%	1,272	1.8%
Neglect of child	216	0.3%	230	0.3%	242	0.3%
Exploitation by family member	10	0.0%	8	0.0%	2	0.0%
Exposure to family violence	412	0.6%	470	0.7%	490	0.7%
Living-in-care issues	262	0.4%	229	0.3%	241	0.3%
School, education & work	4,383	6.1%	4,327	6.2%	4,434	6.3%
Study and education issues	3,291	4.5%	3,319	4.7%	3,269	4.7%
Employment issues	852	1.2%	688	1.0%	788	1.1%
School authority issues	312	0.4%	377	0.5%	439	0.6%
Physical or sexual health & development	4,205	5.8%	3,800	5.4%	3,684	5.2%
Physical health concerns	2,235	3.1%	1,955	2.8%	1,734	2.5%
Pregnancy-related concerns	896	1.2%	852	1.2%	842	1.2%
Sexual activity	919	1.3%	792	1.1%	897	1.3%
Physical/sexual development	108	0.1%	139	0.2%	149	0.2%
Contraception/safe sex	131	0.2%	150	0.2%	126	0.2%
Homelessness & basic needs assistance	1,782	2.5%	1,798	2.6%	1,869	2.7%
Homelessness	986	1.4%	1,018	1.5%	1,045	1.5%
Practical/material assistance	582	0.8%	599	0.9%	667	1.0%
Financial assistance/concerns	257	0.4%	215	0.3%	208	0.3%
Substance use, addictions & risk-taking	1,561	2.2%	1,482	2.1%	1,449	2.1%
Drug use	983	1.4%	965	1.4%	909	1.3%
Alcohol use	449	0.6%	420	0.6%	411	0.6%
Addictive behaviours (not drugs/alcohol)	156	0.2%	122	0.2%	123	0.2%
Physical risk-taking	32	0.0%	36	0.1%	42	0.1%
Gang/cult involvement	9	0.0%	15	0.0%	22	0.0%
Offending, abusive or violent actions	712	1.0%	617	0.9%	693	1.0%
Illegal/offending behaviour	449	0.6%	326	0.5%	367	0.5%
Abusive or violent actions	212	0.3%	221	0.3%	282	0.4%
Sexual violence/offending actions	58	0.1%	78	0.1%	53	0.1%

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 for that class due to multiple concerns within the class being identified in a single contact.

2.7 Referral to further support and duty of care actions

Kids Helpline endeavours to provide a holistic service to children and young people, linking them whenever appropriate and possible to other support services that may assist them to address issues that are causing them concern. In addition, there are times when counsellors contact external agencies directly to provide support to a client or to protect a client who is experiencing significant harm or is at imminent risk of significant harm.

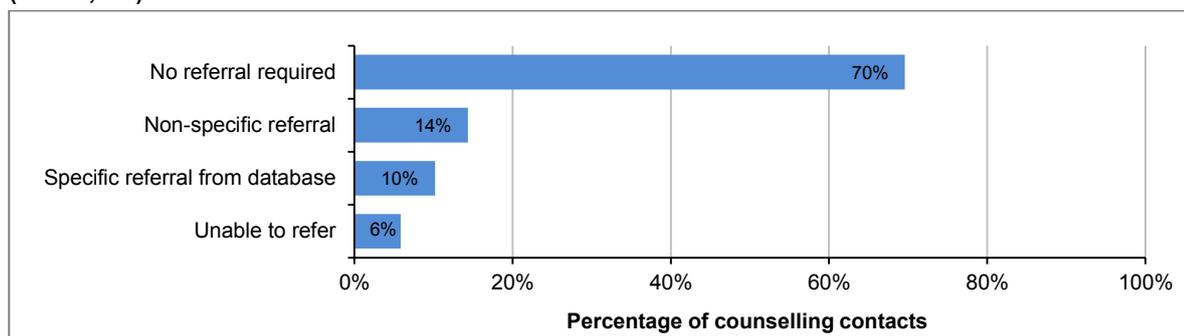
This section provides information about the number and type of referrals made in counselling sessions in 2015 and also the number of attempts made to contact external agencies to support or protect clients in 2015. This includes the number of duty of care interventions that Kids Helpline counsellors initiated. Short-term trend analysis of external contacts is also provided.

2.7.1 Referring children and young people to further support

During 2015, counsellors were able to assist seven out of 10 (70%) children or young people contacting the service for counselling without needing to refer them to another agency for support, as shown in Figure 19. The remaining 30% of counselling contacts required referral for additional support:

- 14% were referred to a generalist service or practitioner, such as a doctor, school/guidance counsellor, local police or mental health worker
- 10% were referred to a specific service for further support, including crisis responses and three-way link-ups with both the client and another agency, and
- 6% required additional support but counsellors were unable to provide a referral. Reasons for this include the child or young person declining a referral, there being no suitable or appropriate service available to refer them to, or the child or young person finishing the session before the referral could be completed or discussed.

Figure 19. Referral to other support – 2015 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years (N = 70,210)¹



1. Percentages sum to less than 100% due to rounding.

2.7.2 External contacts and duty of care interventions

In 2015, there were 2,207 records of counsellors attempting to contact an external agency or agencies to support a child or young person and/or to protect them from significant harm or imminent risk of significant harm. More than three out of four of these records (1,720 or 78%) concerned a duty of care intervention, as shown in Figure 20.

Figure 20 also shows the number of records of external contact attempts in 2013 and 2014. The overall number of external contacts has remained the same over this period (a 2% increase); however, there has been an increase of 12% in duty of care interventions initiated from 2013 to 2015.

Counsellors are able to record up to four different reasons for a duty of care action being taken. Figure 21 shows the frequency with which different reasons for duty of care interventions were recorded in 2015, as well as in 2013 and 2014.

Figure 20. Number of external contact attempts including duty of care interventions – by year

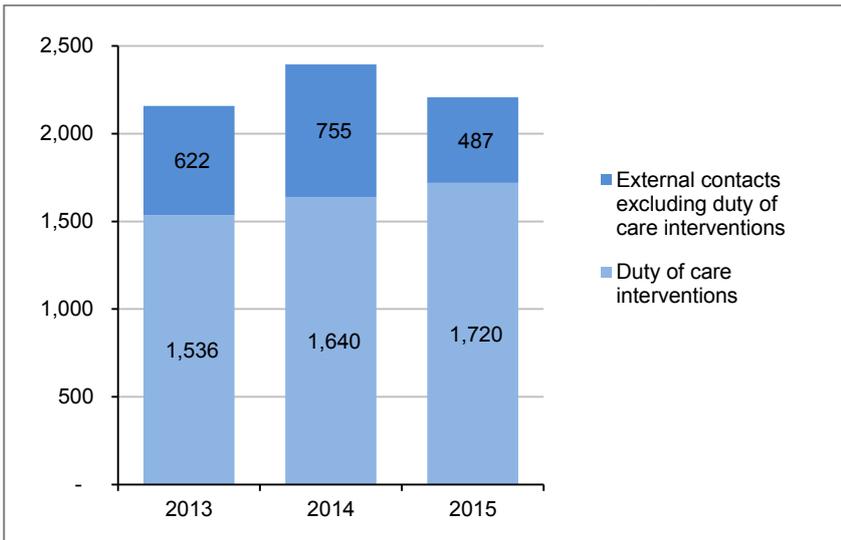
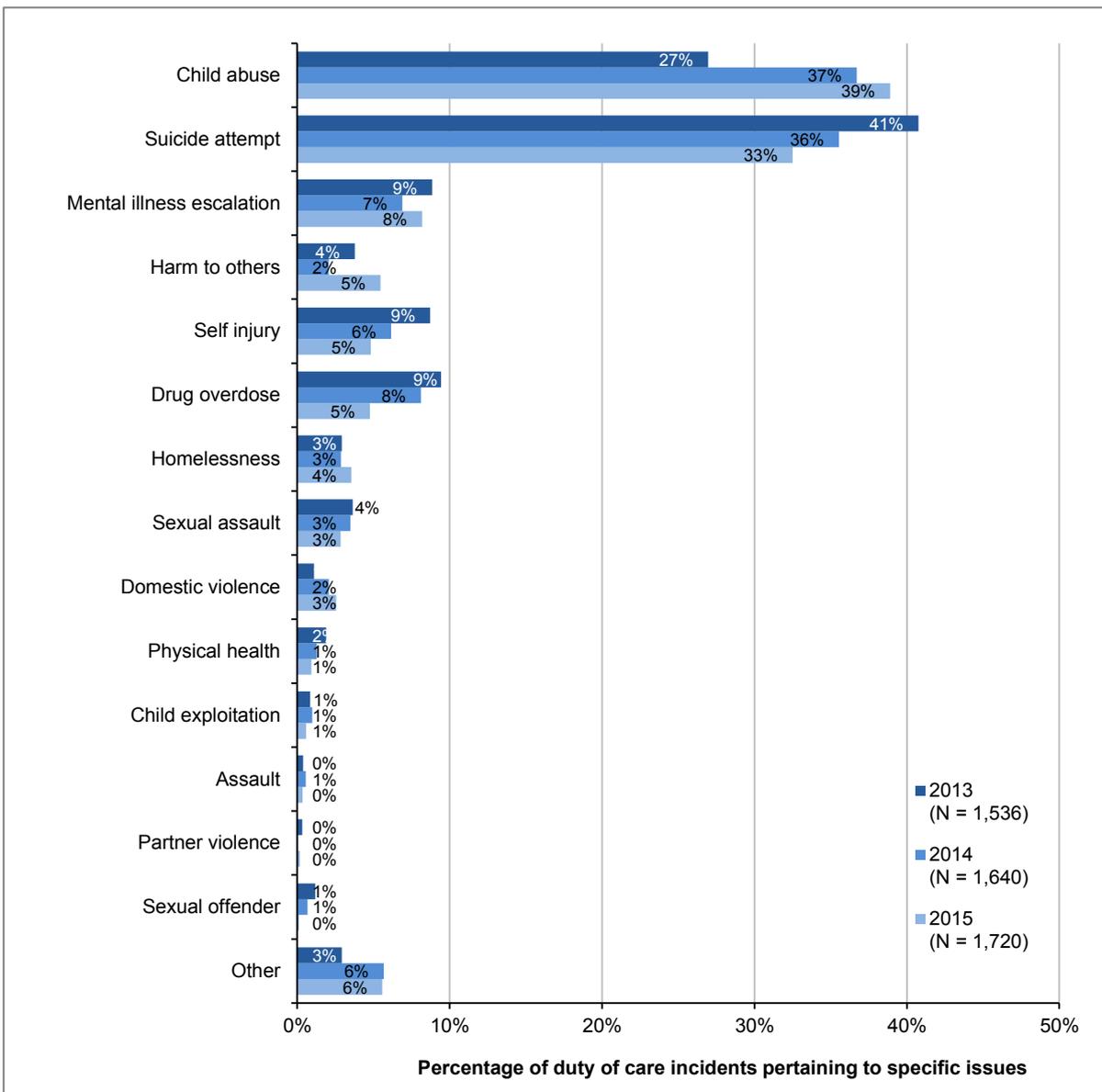


Figure 21. Reasons documented for duty of care interventions – by year¹



1. Up to four issues may be recorded for each duty of care intervention. Accordingly, percentages sum to more than 100%.

Key observations to be noted from the data in Figure 21 include the following:

- Child abuse and suicide attempts were by far the most common reasons for duty of care interventions in 2015 (39% and 33% respectively).
- From 2013 to 2015, there have been a number of changes in the proportional frequency with which certain reasons have been recorded for duty of care interventions. In particular, there has been:
 - a decrease in the proportion of duty of care interventions precipitated by suicide attempts, self-injury and drug overdose (from 41% to 33% for suicide, 9% to 5% for self-injury, and 9% to 5% for drug overdose), and
 - an increase in the proportion of interventions precipitated by concern about child abuse (from 27% to 39%).

2.8 Children and young people seeking counselling for particular issues

Kids Helpline is frequently contacted for further information about various concerns of children and young people that are of contemporary social policy interest. Key among these issues are mental health, suicide, self-injury and child abuse. Table 10 outlines the frequency with which counselling contacts raised these concerns with counsellors in 2015.

Table 10. 2015 Kids Helpline counselling contacts with specific self-identified concerns

Particular concern	Number of contacts with this concern	% of counselling contacts (N = 70,210)
Mental health	15,230	22%
Suicide	7,562	11%
Self-injury	4,466	6%
Child abuse	5,147	7%

When counsellors record a specific issue as a concern of a child or young person, they are required to specify additional information about that concern from a list of subcategories relevant to that concern type. This section presents frequency data on the subcategories of concern relating to mental health, suicide, self-injury and child abuse concerns. The analysis highlights that key aspects of the work of Kids Helpline in relation to these issues is:

- crisis intervention
- harm minimisation and prevention, and/or
- supporting children and young people to manage significant and ongoing issues impacting on their health and wellbeing.

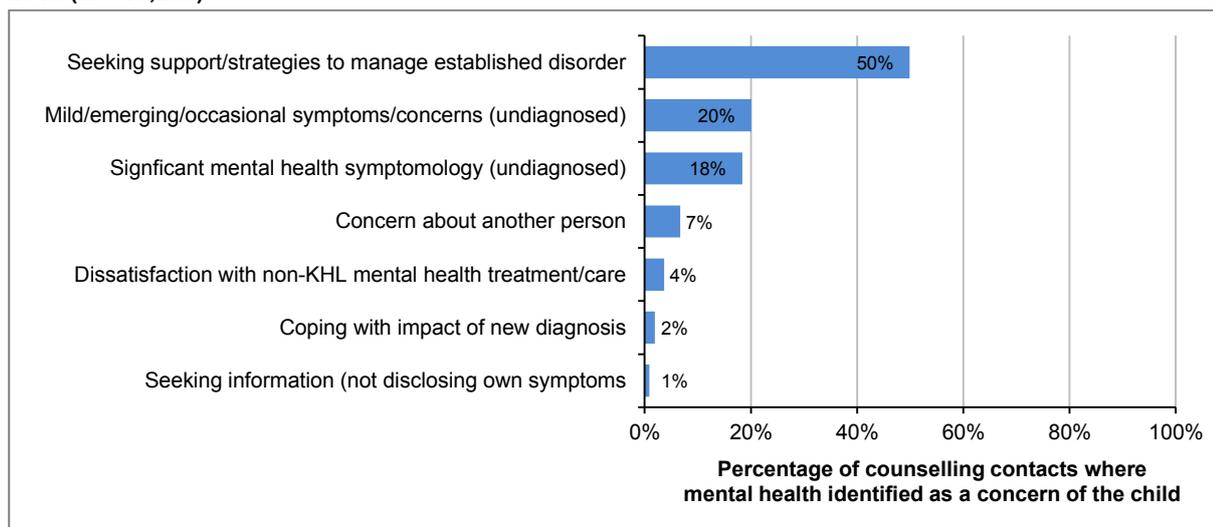
2.8.1 Mental health

When counsellors record mental health as a concern of a child or young person contacting the service, they are required also to specify one of seven subcategories of concern relating to mental health. Figure 22 shows the frequency with which each subcategory was recorded.

Key observations from the data include the following:

- Half (50%) of contacts who received counselling for mental health issues in 2015 were contacting about support or strategies to manage an established disorder.
- Almost two fifths (38%) were contacting about the symptoms of an undiagnosed mental health condition. Half of these (20%) reported mild or occasional symptoms and half (18%) report significant mental health symptoms.
- A small proportion (7%) was contacting to discuss their concern about another person's mental health.

Figure 22. Subcategory of concern where mental health identified as a concern of the child or young person – 2015 (N = 15,230)¹



1. Percentages sum to more than 100% as more than one subcategory of mental health concern may be identified per contact.

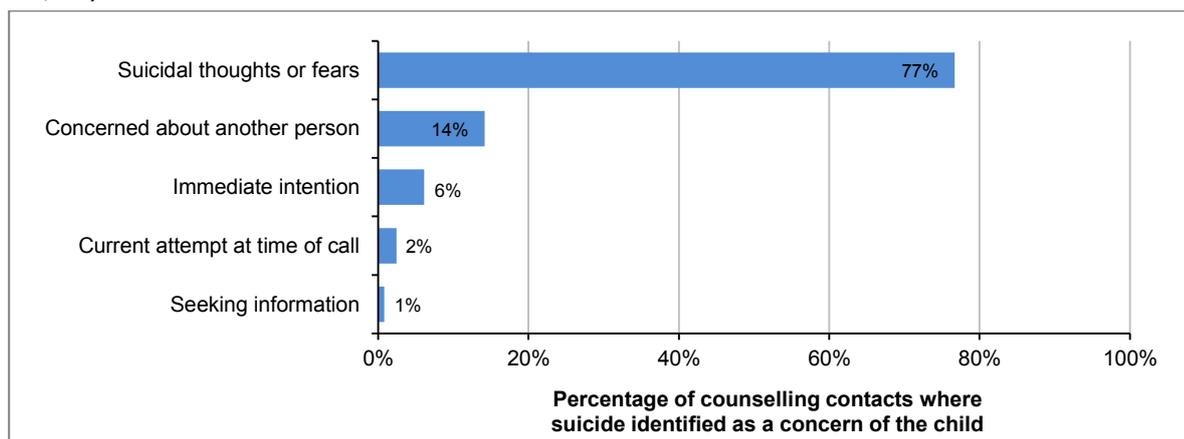
2.8.2 Suicide

When counsellors record suicide as a concern of a child or young person contacting the service, they are required to specify one of five subcategories of concern relating to suicide. Figure 23 shows the frequency with which each subcategory was recorded when suicide was recorded as a concern of the child or young person.

Key observations from the data include the following:

- The vast majority (77%) of contacts who received counselling support in relation to suicide issues in 2015 were contacting about their own suicidal thoughts or fears.
- Roughly one in seven (14%) were contacting to discuss their concern about another person’s suicidal thoughts or feelings.
- One in 12 (8%) reported an immediate intention to suicide or that they were attempting suicide at the time of the call.

Figure 23. Subcategory of concern where suicide identified as a concern of the child or young person – 2015 (N = 7,562)¹



1. Percentages sum to more than 100% as more than one subcategory of suicide concern may be identified per contact.

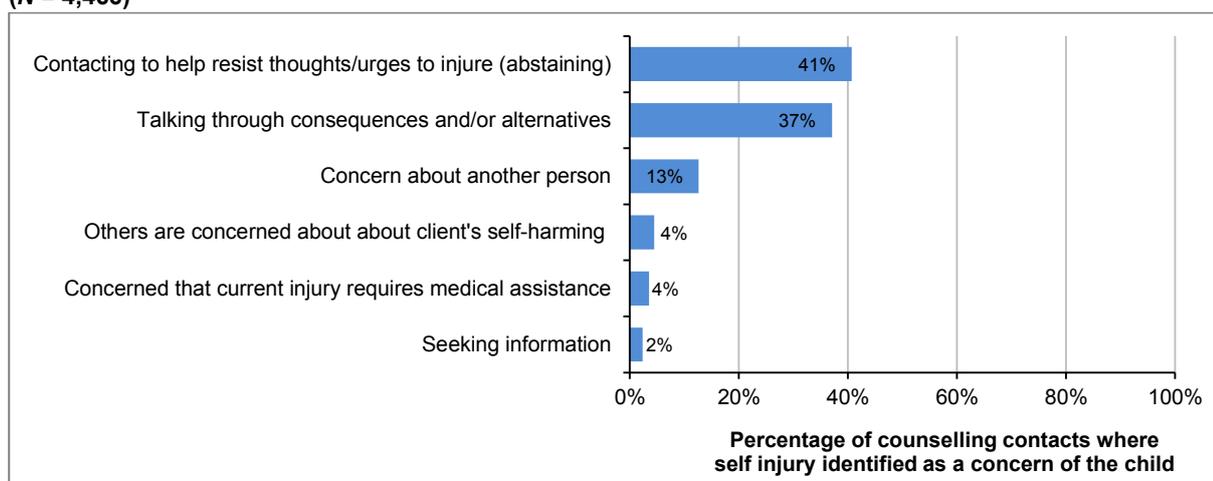
2.8.3 Self-injury

When counsellors record self-injury as a concern of a child or young person, they are required to specify one of six subcategories of concern relating to self-injury. Figure 24 shows the frequency with which each subcategory was recorded when self-injury was recorded as a concern of the child or young person.

Key observations from the data include the following:

- The vast majority (78%) of counselling contacts concerned about self-injury in 2015 were contacting for help to avoid acts of self-injury.
- One in eight (13%) were contacting to discuss their concern about another person's self-harming.
- One in 25 (4%) were contacting about medical assistance required as a result of a current act of self-harm.

Figure 24. Subcategory of concern where self-injury identified as a concern of the child or young person – 2015 (N = 4,466)¹



1. Percentages sum to more than 100% as more than one subcategory of self-injury concern may be identified per contact.

2.8.4 Child abuse

When counsellors record child abuse as a concern of a child or young person, they are required to specify the type of child abuse or concern, namely:

- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- emotional abuse
- neglect
- exploitation by family member
- exposure to family violence, or
- living in care issues.

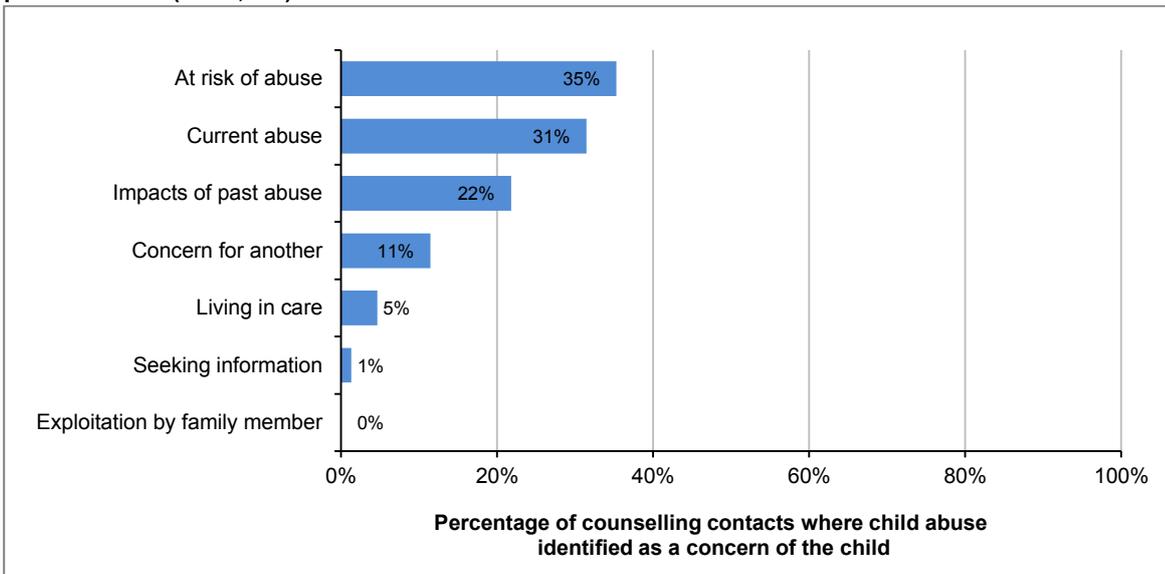
Each of these child abuse concerns has its own set of concern subcategories and counsellors are required to identify one of these each time a type of child abuse concern is identified. A number of the subcategories are consistent across child abuse concern types and can be aggregated for analysis purposes. Figure 25 presents this aggregated data for subcategories of concern about child abuse when a type of child abuse or living in care issue was recorded as a concern of the child or young person.

Key observations from the data include the following:

- Two out of three contacts (66%) who were concerned about child abuse in 2015 were contacting about current abuse or risk of abuse.
- One in five (22%) were contacting in relation to the impacts of past abuse.
- One in 10 (11%) were contacting with concern for another person experiencing or at risk of abuse.

- One in 20 (5%) were contacting about an issue related to living in out-of-home care.

Figure 25. Subcategory of concern where a form of child abuse identified as a concern of the child or young person – 2015 (N = 5,462)¹



1. Percentages sum to more than 100% as more than one subcategory of child abuse concern may be identified per contact.

2.9 Counselling contacts experiencing significant mental health issues

Kids Helpline is frequently contacted for further information about serious problems being experienced by children and young people, such as mental health disorders, suicide and deliberate self-injury. This section provides some insight into the prevalence of these issues among counselling contacts in 2015 and over the last three years.

2.9.1 Current period

When a child or young person contacts Kids Helpline for counselling support, counsellors are required to record whether or not:

- mental health issues were indicated in the session or known to be previously assessed as present for the client (this includes clients known to be diagnosed with a mental health disorder AND those clients that do not yet have a diagnosis but are assessed by a Kids Helpline counsellor to be experiencing or describing symptoms indicative of a mental health disorder)
- the client indicated during the session experiencing current or recent issues with self-injury² including the urge to injure themselves, and/or
- the client disclosed thoughts about killing themselves during the session.

These issues are recorded by counsellors in addition to the self-identified concerns of the child or young person. At times, children and young people experiencing these significant mental health issues will not identify them as their reasons for contacting the service, and yet these issues are important indicators of the child or young person's wellbeing and needs for support. This is why counsellors make these assessments wherever possible.

In terms of the reliability of these assessments, it is worth noting that Kids Helpline exclusively employs tertiary-qualified counsellors who have been trained in recognising the symptoms of common mental health disorders.

Table II summarises the number and percentage of counselling contacts in 2015 who were assessed as experiencing each of these issues. It also indicates the proportion that was assessed to be experiencing *at least one* of these issues.

Key observations about the prevalence of these issues can be summarised as follows:

- three out of 10 counselling contacts (31%) were identified as experiencing a mental health disorder
- approximately one in six (17%) were identified as currently engaging in or struggling with self-injury issues
- one in 10 (11%) were identified as currently experiencing thoughts of suicide, and
- almost two out of every five (38%) counselling contacts were experiencing at least one of these issues.

² Kids Helpline defines self-injury as deliberate, non-life-threatening, self-effected bodily harm with the intent to cause physical harm to oneself in ways that are not intended to end one's life. This could include cutting, hitting a part of the body on a hard surface, punching, hitting or slapping oneself, burning skin, biting or overdosing on substances believed to be non-lethal. Self-injury *does not include*: deep slashing; self-poisoning or overdoses of substances believed by the young person as likely to be fatal; suicide attempts; deliberate car crashing; ear or nose piercing; professional tattooing; nail-biting; head-shaving; intentional harm to emotions or feelings; or starving oneself, such as in relation to an eating disorder. KHL recognises that self-injury is different from suicidal behaviour, but some young people who self-injure are also suicidal or can become suicidal.

Table 11. Number and percentage of 2015 Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years assessed by counsellors to be experiencing particular issues

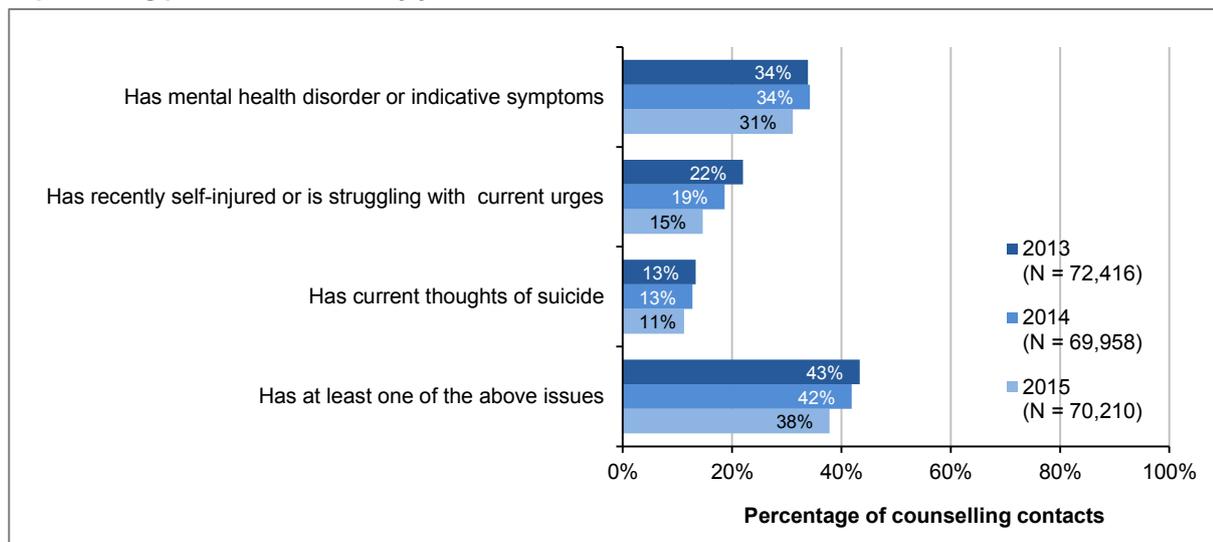
Issue being experienced by child or young person as assessed by counsellor	<i>n</i>	% of counselling contacts (N = 70,210)
Has mental health disorder	21,870	31%
Has current difficulties with self-injury	10,273	15%
Has current thoughts of suicide	7,874	11%
At least one of the above issues	26,570	38%

2.9.2 Trend analysis

Figure 26 presents a three-year trend analysis of the proportional frequency with which these problems were assessed by counsellors among counselling contacts. Key observations of the data include:

- The frequency with which mental health issues are assessed by counsellors as present has remained stable over the last three years, as has the frequency with which clients disclose to counsellors experiencing current thoughts of suicide.
- There would appear to be a moderate decrease, however, in the frequency with which counsellors identify children and young people as experiencing issues with self-injury (from 22% in 2013 to 15% in 2015), and a slight decrease in the proportion experiencing at least one of these three issues (from 43% to 38%).

Figure 26. Percentage of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years identified by counsellors to be experiencing particular issues – by year



3. Kids Helpline website

In addition to its counselling and support service, Kids Helpline operates a website for self-directed help-seeking by children, young people and adults (www.kidshelp.com.au). The self-help resources provided on the website, and in particular the *Tips & Info* pages for *kids*, *teens* and *parents & carers*³, have been developed by clinical staff and researchers. They are intended to provide information and strategies to assist users in responding to common issues and concerns.

Understanding patterns in website use and demand are important in terms of continuing to develop this aspect of the service and to ensure that the materials provided are being engaged with. This chapter first considers demand for various types of self-help resources and then considers the key issues or topics that appear to be of interest or concern to website visitors.

3.1 Service demand

Table 12 presents various measures of website demand and compares these over a three-year period to identify changes in demand over time for particular website resources.

Table 12. Kids Helpline website demand – by year¹

Measure of demand	2013 ²	2014	2015 ³	% change 2013-2015 ³
Sessions				
	717,138	833,342	919,589	+28%
Unique visitors				
	534,377	648,343	720,077	+35%
Page views (all pages)				
	2,645,463	2,747,033	2,714,829	+3%
Page views of <i>Tips & Info</i>				
<i>Tips & Info</i> for kids	33,344	41,980	48,033	+44%
<i>Tips & Info</i> for teens	174,297	258,269	312,619	+79%
<i>Tips & Info</i> for parents & carers	127,987	180,102	194,336	+52%
Total <i>Tips & Info</i> page views	335,628	480,351	554,988	+65%
Page views of “Your Stories”				
	124,044	114,335	95,455	-23%
Uses of “Search for a Service” function				
	5,760	6,175	4,799	-17%

1. Data courtesy of Google Analytics.

2. In 2013, Google Analytics generated data on the basis of a sample of 91% of sessions in 2013.

3. Due to technical difficulties with Google Analytics, website activity was not recorded between 1-11 October 2015. Accordingly, all website activity measures for 2015 will be undercounts. This will also affect the % change from 2013 to 2015 calculated in the far right-hand side column.

Key observations from the data in Table 12 include the following:

- In 2015 there were 720,007 unique visitors to the Kids Helpline website who collectively participated in close to a million (919,589) web sessions.
- Over the last three years, web sessions have increased by 28% and unique visitors by 35%.
- Demand has not grown equally for all self-help resources. For example, page views of teens *Tips & Info* topics have increased by 79% over the three year period while page views of children and young people’s self-submitted stories have decreased by 17%.

³ *Tips & Info* resources were previously known as *Hot Topics*.

3.2 Key issues of interest to website visitors

Understanding the interests and needs of website visitors is important in terms of developing relevant and effective self-help resources. Two sources of insight into the issues of concern to website visitors are:

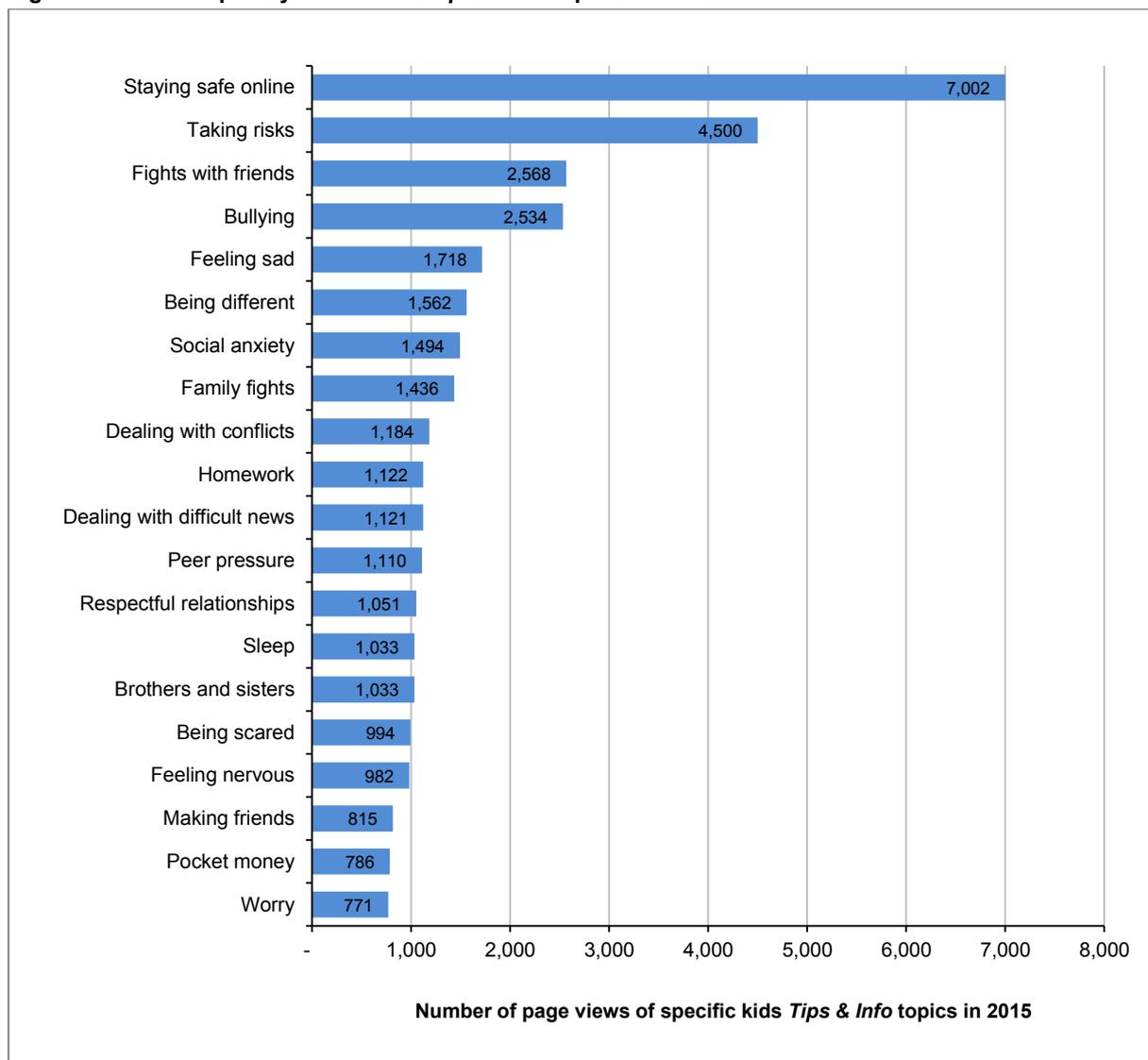
- the most commonly visited self-help resources, and in particular *Tips & Info* topics for kids, teens and parents/carers, and
- the most common sources of referral to the Kids Helpline website.

3.2.1 *Tips & Info* resources

Kids

During 2015, there were 45 *Tips & Info* topics on the Kids Helpline website targeted at children, receiving a total of 48,033 page views. Figure 27 shows the frequency with which the 20 most popular of these resources were accessed.

Figure 27. Most frequently visited kids *Tips & Info* topics in 2015^{1, 2}



1. Total kids *Tips & Info* page views in 2015 = 48,033.

2. Due to technical difficulties with Google Analytics, website activity was not recorded between 1-11 October 2015. Accordingly, all website activity measures for 2015 will be an undercount.

Key observations from the data in this figure include the following:

- 38% of all kids *Tips & Info* page views were in relation to five topics – *staying safe online, taking risks, fights with friends, bullying, and feeling sad*. The first four of these issues were the most frequently visited topics in 2014 as well, suggesting some continuity in the issues of concern to children visiting the site.
- The relatively high level of concern in this age group regarding bullying and relationships with friends and peers mirrors the concerns of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-12 years (see Figures 13 and 15).

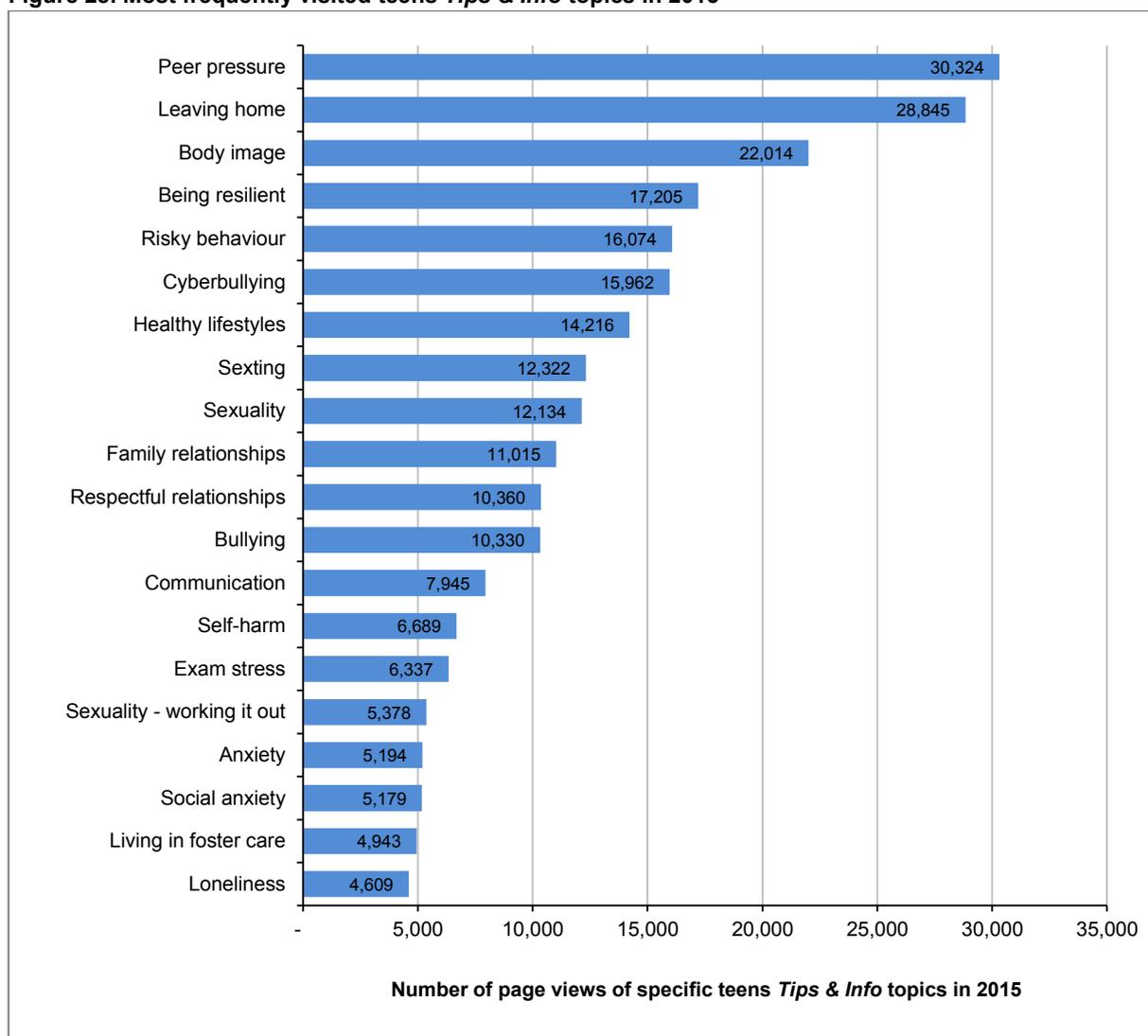
Teens

During 2015, there were 51 *Tips & Info* topics targeted at teenagers receiving a total of 312,619 page views. Figure 28 shows the frequency with which the 20 most popular of these resources were accessed.

Key observations from the data in this figure include the following:

- 37% of all teens *Tips & Info* page views were in relation to five topics – *peer pressure, leaving home, body image, resilience and risky behaviour*. The topics *peer pressure, leaving home and body image* were also among the five most frequently visited teens *Tips & Info* topics in 2014, again suggesting some stability in the issues of interest to website visitors of this age group.

Figure 28. Most frequently visited teens *Tips & Info* topics in 2015^{1, 2, 3}



1. Total teens *Tips & Info* page views in 2015 = 312,619.

2. Due to technical difficulties with Google Analytics, website activity was not recorded between 1-11 October 2015. Accordingly, all website activity measures for 2015 will be an undercount.

3. Page views for "sexuality" are a composite of three different *Tips & Info* topics on sexuality. "Sexuality and development" and "sexuality and identity" replaced "sexuality – working it out" in early June 2015.

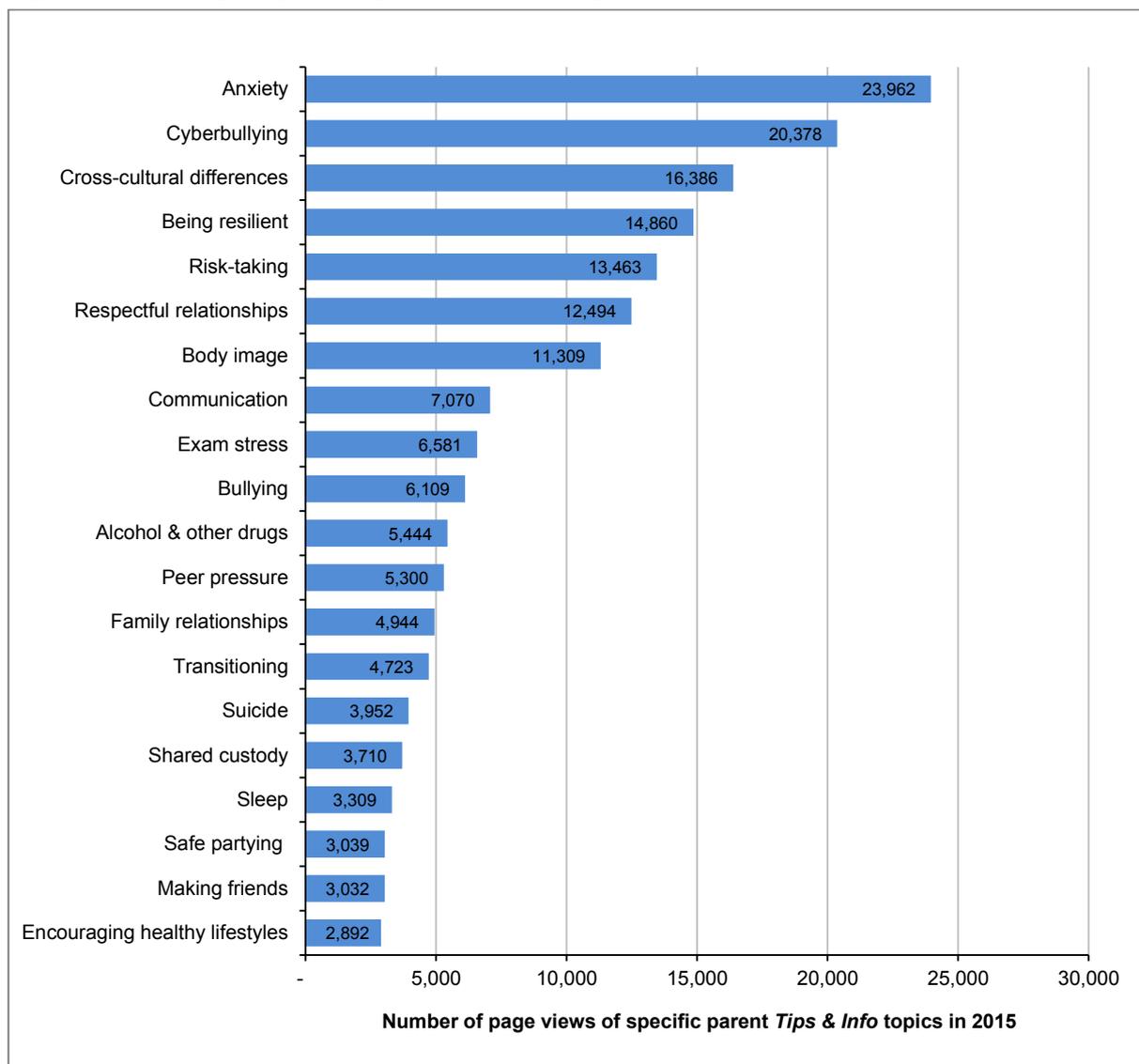
Parents/carers

During 2015, there were 41 *Tips & Info* topics targeted at adults – primarily parents, guardians, teachers and other significant adults in children’s lives. Figure 29 shows the frequency with which the 20 most popular of these resources were accessed.

Key observations from the data in this figure include the following:

- Close to half (46%) of all Parent/Carer *Tips & Info* page views were in relation to five topics – *anxiety*, *cyberbullying*, *cross-cultural differences*, *resilience*, and *risk-taking*. The four most frequently viewed topics in 2015 were also the most commonly viewed by adults in 2014.

Figure 29. Most frequently visited parent *Tips & Info* topics in 2015^{1, 2}



1. Total parent *Tips & Info* page views in 2015 = 194,336.

2. Due to technical difficulties with Google Analytics, website activity was not recorded between 1-11 October 2015. Accordingly, page views presented in this graph will be an undercount.

3.2.2 Referrals from other websites

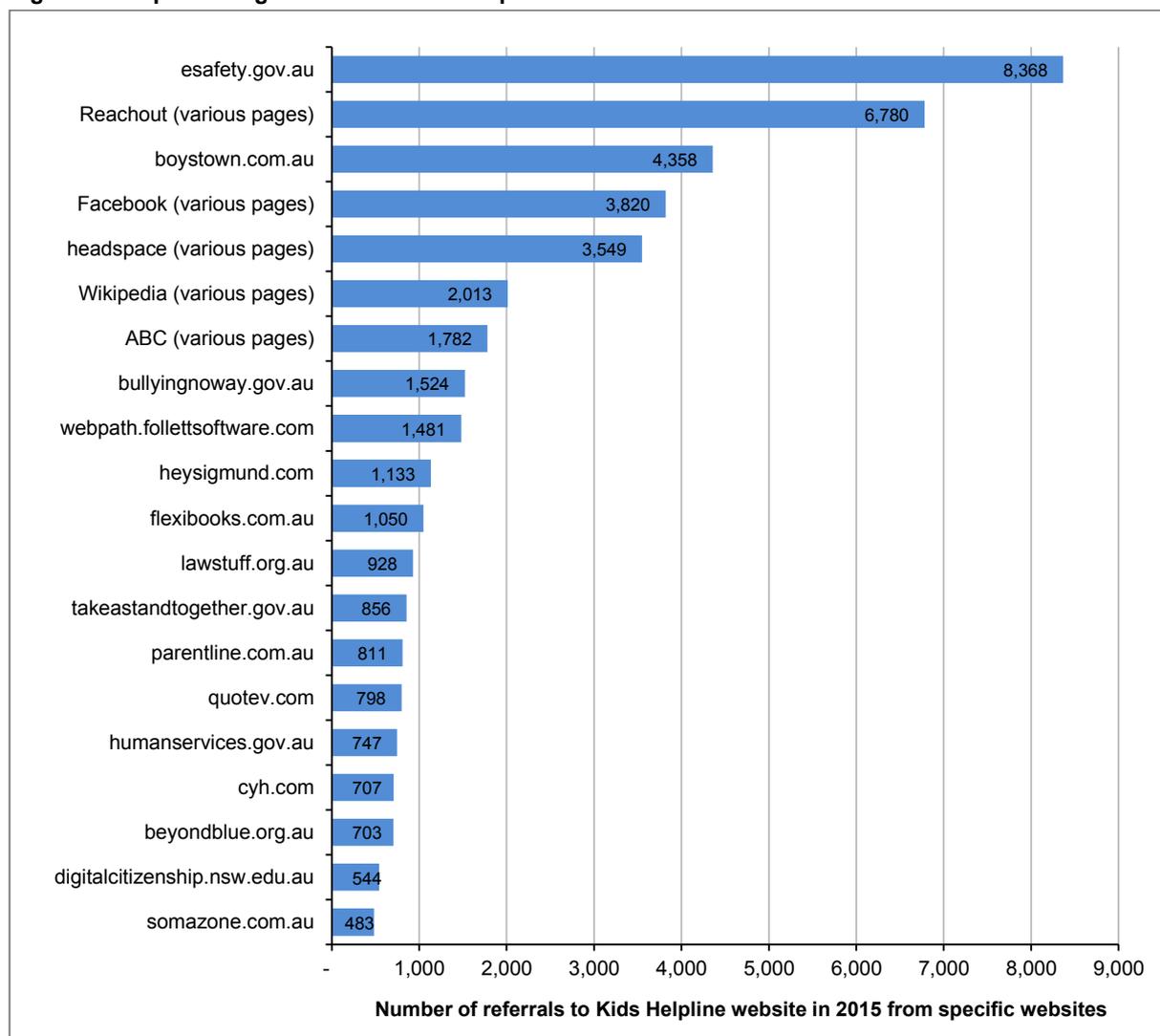
Understanding the pathways by which website visitors find and access the site is also important for understanding and responding effectively to their interests and needs. Figure 30 shows the websites that most frequently referred people to the Kids Helpline website during 2015.

Key observations from the data in this figure include the following:

- Of the 42,435 referrals to the Kids Helpline website received from these 20 websites:
 - over 8,000 were received from the Australian Government’s eSafety (formerly Cybersmart) website

- close to 3,000 additional referrals came from other cybersafety and anti-bullying websites (i.e. Bullying No Way, Take a Stand Together, Digital Citizenship)
- close to 14,000 referrals came from youth and generalist mental health and counselling websites (i.e. ReachOut, headspace, Beyond Blue, Child and Youth Health, etc).

Figure 30. Top referring websites to Kids Helpline website in 2015^{1, 2, 3}



1. Excludes referrals from search engines and Kids Helpline website.

2. Due to technical difficulties with Google Analytics, website activity was not recorded between 1-11 October 2015. Accordingly, referral data presented in this graph will be undercounts.

3. The eSafety Commission website replaced the Cybersmart website on 1 July 2015 so counts for esafety.gov.au include referrals for cybersmart.gov.au prior to 1 July.

3.2.3 Summary

- The number of cybersafety and anti-bullying referrals, and the frequency with which Kids Helpline website visitors of all ages consulted *Tips & Info* topics on cybersafety issues (online safety, sexting, cyberbullying, etc.) and bullying suggest that cybersafety and bullying are key contemporary concerns of young Australians and those responsible for their care.
- Similarly, the number of mental health and counselling website referrals, and the frequency with which Kids Helpline website from all age groups consulted *Tips & Info* topics on a range of mental health issues (anxiety, depression, body image, stress, resilience, loneliness, self-harm, suicide, etc.) suggest that this is also a broad area of contemporary concern to young Australian and their parents and carers.

4. Kids Helpline @ School

4.1 What is Kids Helpline @ School?

Kids Helpline @ School is an early intervention and prevention program for primary school-aged children. Funded by Optus, the program offers primary schools a professional counsellor-facilitated classroom session via video technology to discuss topics impacting on the lives of students. Sessions have been developed around the most common issues for which primary school students seek information or help through the Kids Helpline counselling and support service. These include bullying, difficulty making and maintaining friendships and emotional wellbeing.

Sessions are designed to raise awareness of and encourage discussions about issues related to mental health and wellbeing, and to increase children's mental health literacy, help-seeking behaviours, resilience, coping strategies, and knowledge of sources of help such as Kids Helpline. All sessions, additionally, have a focus on assisting children to engage positively and safely in online environments, teaching them about principles of 'digital citizenship' and to speak out when negative online experiences occur.

The program commenced in June 2013. This chapter of the report describes the main activities and outputs of the program in the 2015 calendar year and key findings of the Year 2 evaluation study undertaken in 2015.

4.2 Key program activities and outputs for 2015

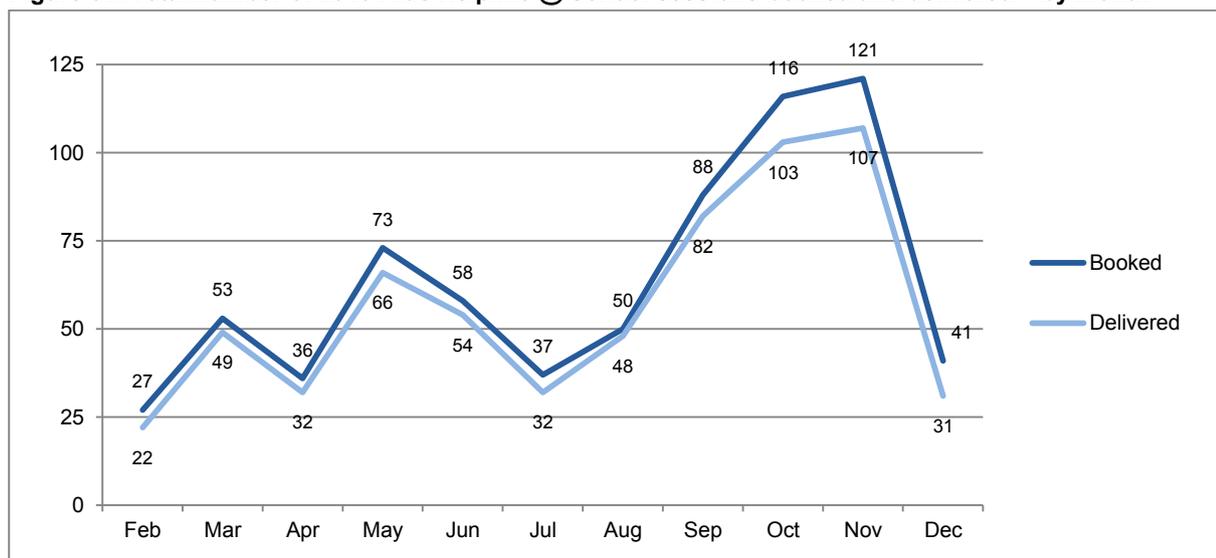
4.2.1 Sessions booked and delivered and participants involved

In 2015, 198 schools used the Kids Helpline @ School website to book 700 sessions between February and December 2015, as shown in Figure 31. Of these, 175 schools completed 626 sessions. A total of 17,211 primary school students participated in sessions.

Seventy-four sessions were cancelled for reasons ranging from school technology faults and firewall issues, teacher illness or class unavailability, and state education technology platform changes. The majority of sessions cancelled were subsequently rebooked and completed.

There were no sessions booked or held during January 2015 due to school holidays. Other months affected by school holidays in 2015 were April, July, September, October and December.

Figure 31. Total number of 2015 Kids Helpline @ School sessions booked and delivered – by month



4.2.2 Topics of discussion

In 2015, sessions were conducted on 14 different topics. Table 13 shows the number and percentage of students who participated in sessions on each topic and the number of sessions held on that topic. The topics most frequently requested by teachers for discussion were *developing resilience*, *introduction to Kids Helpline*, *friendship* and *transition to high school*.

Table 13. 2015 Kids Helpline @ School participants and sessions by session topic

Topic	Number of booked participants	% of total booked participants	Number of sessions held
Developing resilience	3,427	20%	123
Introduction to Kids Helpline	2,343	14%	75
Friendship	2,153	14%	86
Transition to high school	2,008	12%	76
Online safety	1,959	11%	68
Being a school leader	1,093	7%	42
Cyberbullying	909	5%	32
Bullying	823	4%	27
Taking charge of anger	759	5%	31
Peer pressure	653	4%	24
Worry	489	3%	19
Feeling sad	341	2%	14
Coping with change at school	131	1%	4
Family arguments	123	1%	5
Total	17,211	100%	626

4.2.3 Geographical reach

The majority of schools participating in the program during 2015 were in Victoria and New South Wales, comprising 66% of all schools using the service, as shown in Figure 32. These states also held the largest number of sessions, accounting for 58% of the total number of sessions held. Schools in the ACT participated at notably higher rates than the national average of 3.5 sessions per school with a rate of 15 sessions per school.

Figure 32. Number of 2015 Kids Helpline @ School participating schools and sessions – by state

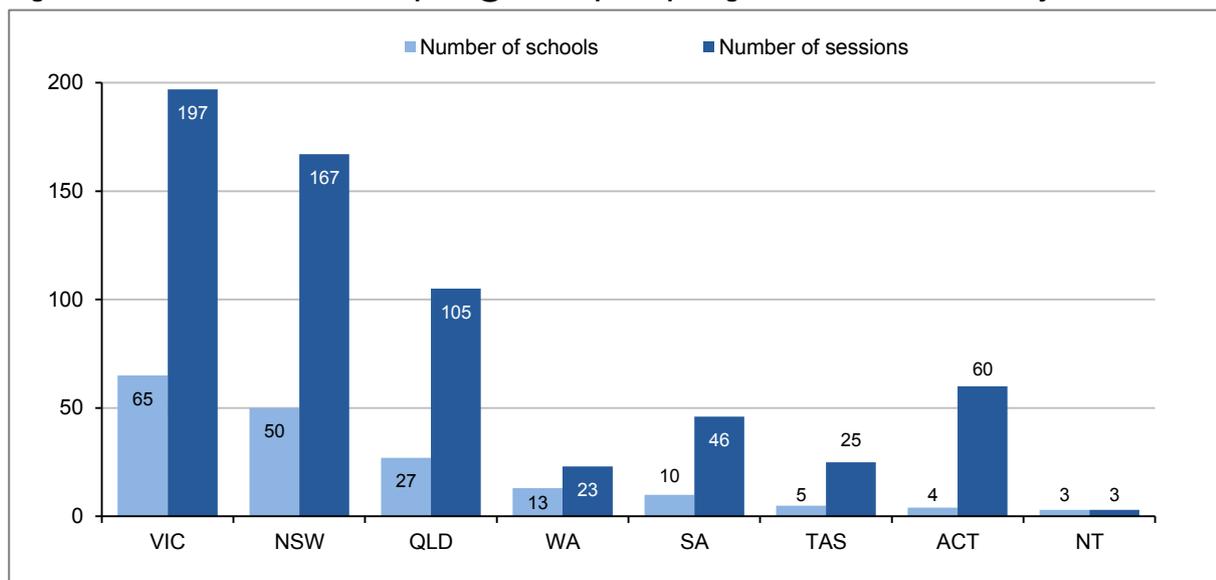
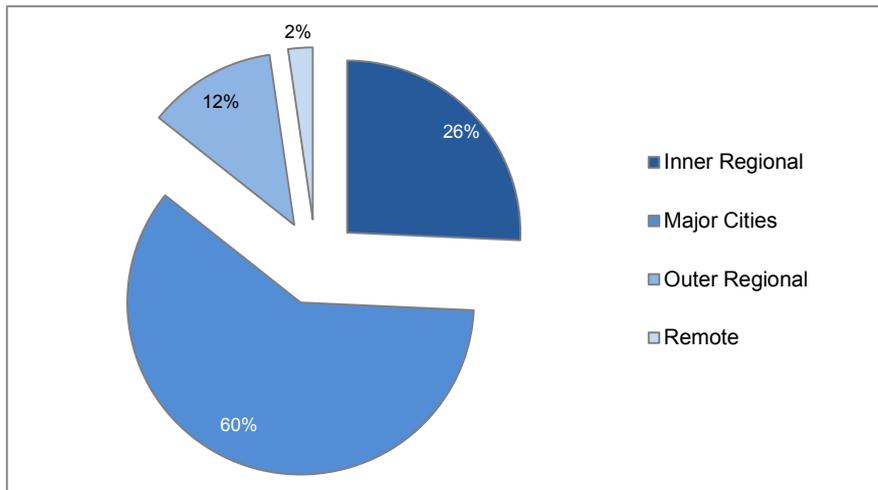


Figure 33 shows the proportion of participating schools by their remoteness classification. Three in five (60%) schools were situated in Major Cities, while 14% were based in Outer Regional or Remote locations. One in four (26%) were based in Inner Regional locations.

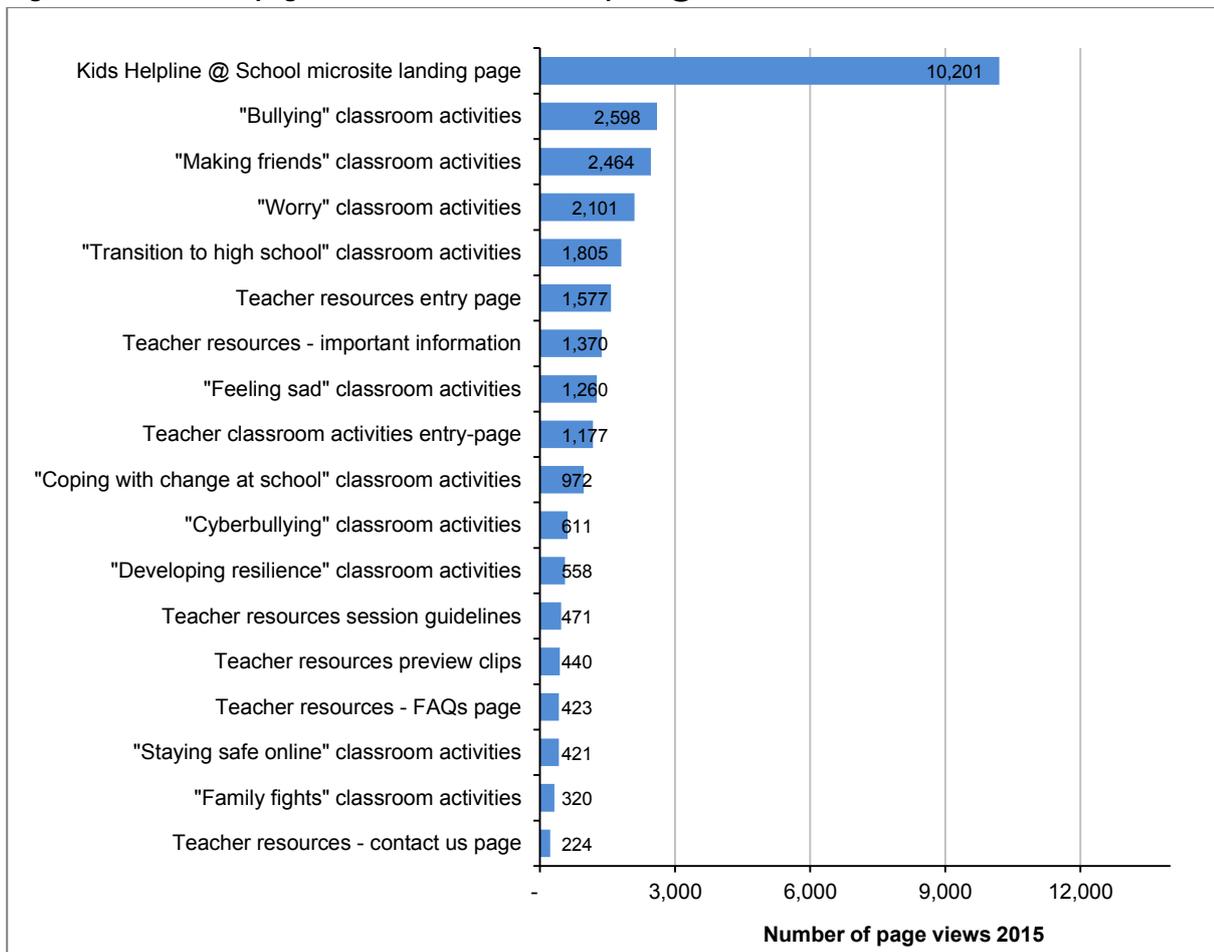
Figure 33. Proportion of 2015 Kids Helpline @ School participating schools – by remoteness (N = 175)



4.2.4 Use of teacher resource materials

During 2015, teachers made substantial use of educational material uploaded to the Kids Helpline @ School micro-website. During this period there were 10,201 views of the Kids Helpline @ School microsite landing page. Figure 34 shows the number of views of pages containing specific information/educational material made available to teachers to support their participation in the Kids Helpline @ School program.

Figure 34. Number of page views in 2015 to Kids Helpline @ School micro-website resources for teachers



4.3 Evaluation of impact

4.3.1 Year 2 Evaluation

yourtown's Strategy and Research unit has been measuring the effectiveness of the Kids Helpline @ School program since the program's commencement in 2013. Following positive indications of program effectiveness in the first year of the program, yourtown increased the scope of its evaluative study in 2015 to include measures of short- and medium-term change.

Methodology

The Year 2 evaluation methodology included the classification of desired outcomes from program objectives into four domains:

1. Awareness of mental health/wellbeing and cyber-related issues
2. Understanding and awareness of help-seeking behaviours
3. Knowledge of Kids Helpline
4. Attitudinal/behaviour change

Nineteen indicators of change were developed under these four domains, along with an additional six indicators of client satisfaction and/or process effectiveness. Of the 25 indicators, 17 were repeat measures from the Year 1 evaluation.

Data were collected from students and teachers via surveys completed immediately after their classroom session or in the days immediately following a session. Follow-up data were collected from teachers between three and six months after their sessions, also via surveys. Survey instruments were designed for completion by specific age groups to enhance their validity.

Findings

"Students are more aware of the effects of bullying and the psychological underlying issues associated with social pressures and attacks. They feel more responsibility to report and discuss anti-social behaviour towards themselves and others" [Teacher-Grade 6]

The Year 2 evaluation findings indicate that the program continues to be highly successful in achieving its objectives. Key achievements of the program include:

- 84% of teachers observed improvements in students' peer relationships at 3-6 months follow-up
- 80% of teachers observed continuing discussion of the topic among students at 3-6 months follow-up
- 69% of teachers observed more students reporting bullying experiences rather than suffering silently at the 3-6 months follow-up
- 89% of Grades 4-7 students reported having more ideas about how to deal with the issue discussed
- 77% of Grades 4-7 students reported increased confidence to deal with the issue discussed
- 94% of teachers reported improved student understanding of help-seeking options, and
- 87% of all students reported being likely to contact Kids Helpline if they had a concern in the future.

Qualitative data collected from both teachers and students provide further evidence of positive program impact, with both teachers and students commenting on the range of ways the program had changed their attitudes and behaviours.

"It made me feel more confident of my choices and how to be a good leader."

"[Kids Helpline@School was] [v]ery helpful because I know that if I was to talk about one of my problems now, I wouldn't be so very nervous."

"[The students are] less likely to say negative comments towards each other."

Schools typically provide a range of wellbeing and positive behaviour education activities that may contribute to the achievement of the Kids Helpline @ School program objectives. However, a number of teachers who

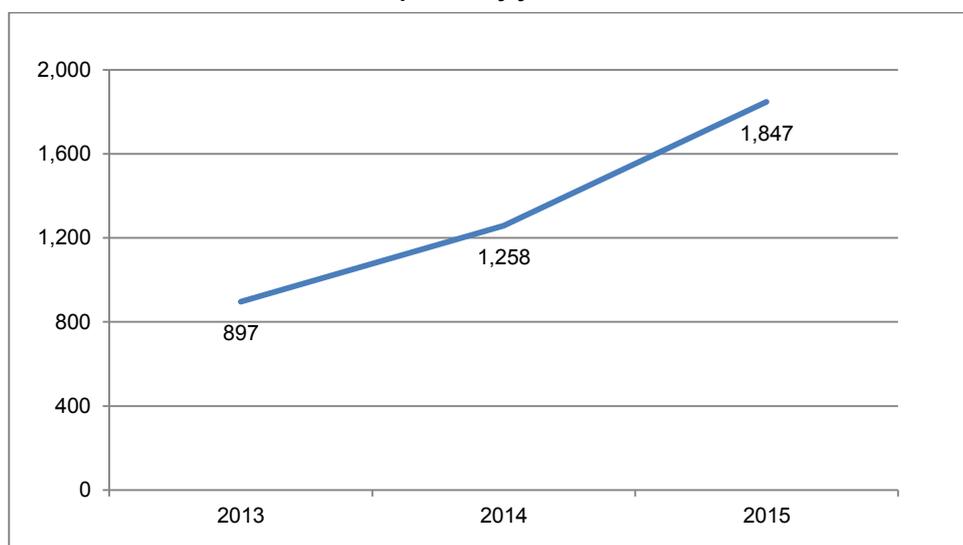
participated in the Year 2 evaluation were of the view that the primary cause of improvements they observed in student knowledge, behaviours and attitudes was students' participation in the Kids Helpline @ School program. Teacher satisfaction with the program, moreover, continued to be broadly indicated in the Year 2 evaluation (96% of survey respondents intended to book another session and the same proportion reported they would recommend the program to other teachers).

4.3.2 Evidence of providing a pathway to help

Kids Helpline @ School participants frequently report intentions to contact Kids Helpline in the future if they have worries or concerns. To assess whether these reported intentions are translating into increased Kids Helpline contacts, the Kids Helpline Record-a-Contact database was analysed for trends in referral information from 2013 to 2015.

Figure 35 shows the number contacts from children aged 5 to 12 years who indicated to counsellors that they had heard about Kids Helpline either from "school" or from "Kids Helpline @ School sessions". It shows an increase of 106% in contacts from this age group referred from school or Kids Helpline @ School over the three year period.

Figure 35. Number of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-12 years reporting "school" or "Kids Helpline @ School" as their source of referral to Kids Helpline – by year¹



1. Substantial missing data in relation to the "how did you hear about Kids Helpline?" field may undermine the absolute reliability of the observed increase in referrals over this period.

5. Kids Helpline 2015 client satisfaction & outcome survey

yourtown believes that service users provide an essential perspective in evaluating the quality and effectiveness of Kids Helpline services. One way that **yourtown** engages the views of service users is through an annual client satisfaction and outcome survey. This chapter provides a summary of findings from the 2015 survey. A more comprehensive report of findings, including qualitative feedback from service users, will be available later in 2016.

5.1 Objectives

The primary objectives of the Kids Helpline annual client satisfaction and outcome survey are to:

- gauge the satisfaction of children and young people who use the Kids Helpline counselling and support service and/or Kids Helpline website, and
- gain feedback about the service including the impact service users perceive the service has had on them.

This information is collected both to inform ongoing service development and for the purpose of reporting to funding bodies and sponsors.

5.2 Methodology

A brief online survey, comprising a combination of open response and fixed response items, was conducted over seven weeks between December 2015 to February 2016. The survey was open to any individual who had accessed the Kids Helpline counselling and support service or visited the Kids Helpline website within the last 12 months.

A hyperlink to the survey entitled “Have Your Say” was placed on the front page of both the Kids’ and Teens’ web portals. In addition, the survey was promoted to potential respondents through invitations to participate included in:

- the final exchange of web chat counselling sessions
- the concluding email of email counselling sessions
- the phone call wait message for children and young people waiting to speak to a counsellor (this was active for the last two weeks of the data collection period)
- the closing statement of counsellors to children and young people who participated in phone counselling (this was at the counsellor’s discretion, however), and
- two posts on the Kids Helpline Facebook page during the data collection period.

5.3 Key findings

5.3.1 Sample

A total of 300 individuals responded to the survey, 285 of whom indicated they were aged 5-25 years. Table 14 provides a summary of the demographic characteristics of respondents. It also compares respondents’ characteristics with those of Kids Helpline counselling and support service contacts aged 5-25 years in 2015 to assess how representative the sample may be of those using the service.

Key observations from the data include the following:

- *Gender.* The vast majority of survey respondents were female (80%). Survey respondents were more likely to be female than were counselling and support service contacts in 2015 (71%).
- *Age.* The sample possibly over-represents 13-18 year old service users. Almost three-quarters (73%) of respondents were aged 13-18 years, while just over half (55%) of counselling and support contacts in 2015 were in this age range. On the other hand, those aged 19 to 25 years are possibly under-represented in the survey sample compared with the population of Kids Helpline counselling and support service contacts in 2015 (12% c.f. 33%).

- *Cultural background.* Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders were represented in the survey sample in slightly higher proportion to counselling and support service contacts in 2015 (6% to 4%); however, those from CALD backgrounds were comparatively under-represented (16% c.f. 34%) and those from non-ATSI/CALD backgrounds were comparatively over-represented (79% c.f. 63%)
- *Location.* Survey respondents were represented from every state and territory roughly in proportion to the state breakdown for counselling and support service contacts in 2015 with two exceptions: an over-representation of survey respondents from Victoria (35% c.f. 24%) and a slight under-representation of respondents from New South Wales (30% c.f. 37%).

Table 14. Characteristics of 2015 Kids Helpline client satisfaction and outcome survey respondents compared with 2015 Kids Helpline counselling and support service contacts aged 5-25 years¹

Respondent characteristics	2015 KHL client satisfaction & outcome survey respondents (n = 300)		2015 KHL counselling & support service contacts aged 5-25 years (N = 205,286)	
	n	col. %	n	col. %
Gender				
Female	236	80%	89,952	71%
Male	47	16%	35,930	28%
Intersex, trans or gender diverse	13	4%	619	<1%
Total	296	100%	126,501	100%
Unknown	3		78,785	
Age group				
5-12 years	40	14%	12,824	12%
13-18 years	210	73%	56,857	55%
19-25 years	35	12%	33,946	33%
26 +	4	1%	-	-
Total	289	100%	103,627	100%
Unknown	11		101,659	
Cultural background²				
Aboriginal &/or TSI	16	6%	1,642	4%
CALD	45	16%	15,800	34%
Neither ATSI nor CALD	228	79%	29,288	63%
Total	289	100%	46,730	100%
Unknown	11		158,556	
State				
ACT	4	1%	2,979	2%
NSW	88	30%	70,977	37%
NT	2	1%	1,420	1%
QLD	50	17%	35,027	18%
SA	21	7%	13,855	7%
TAS	6	2%	4,325	2%
VIC	101	35%	46,711	24%
WA	20	7%	15,628	8%
Total	292	100%	190,922	100%
Unknown	8		14,364	

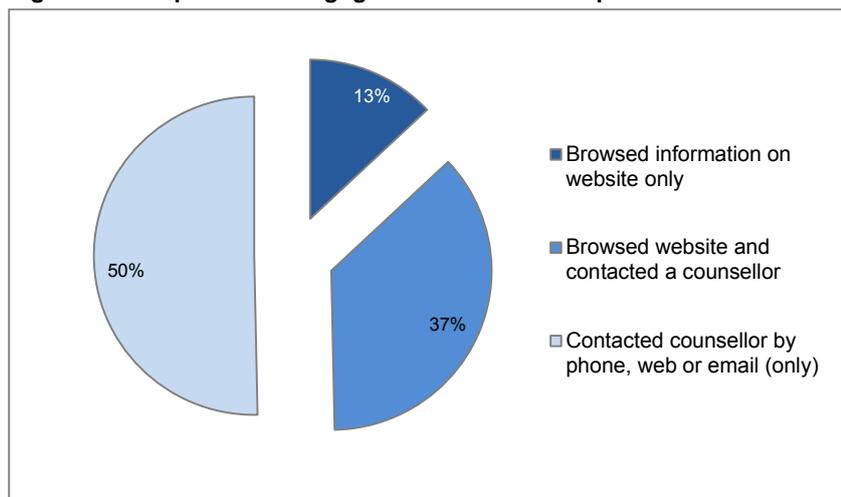
1. Where column percentages sum to more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

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

5.3.2 Type of engagement with Kids Helpline in last 12 months

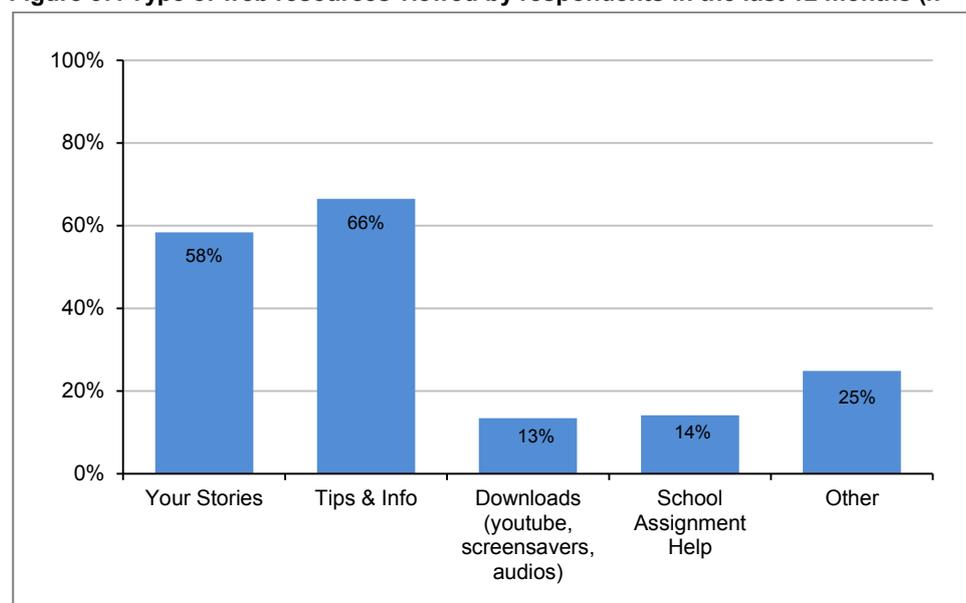
Survey respondents were asked about their engagement with the Kids Helpline counselling and support service and website over the last 12 months. A total of 261 respondents (87%) had contacted the counselling and support service and 149 respondents (50%) had visited or browsed the website. As shown in Figure 36, half the respondents (50%) had contacted the counselling and support service but not browsed the website, while most of the other half (37%) had contacted the counselling and support service *and* browsed the website. A smaller proportion (13%) had visited the website but not contacted the counselling and support service.

Figure 36. Respondents' engagement with Kids Helpline in last 12 months (n = 300)



Those who had accessed the website (n = 149) were asked which types of information on the site they had viewed. Figure 37 summarises young people's responses. The most commonly accessed information resource was *Tips & Info*, viewed by two out of three (66%) respondents, followed by young people self-submitted stories, viewed by three out of five (58%) respondents.

Figure 37. Type of web resources viewed by respondents in the last 12 months (n = 149)¹



¹ Percentages sum to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

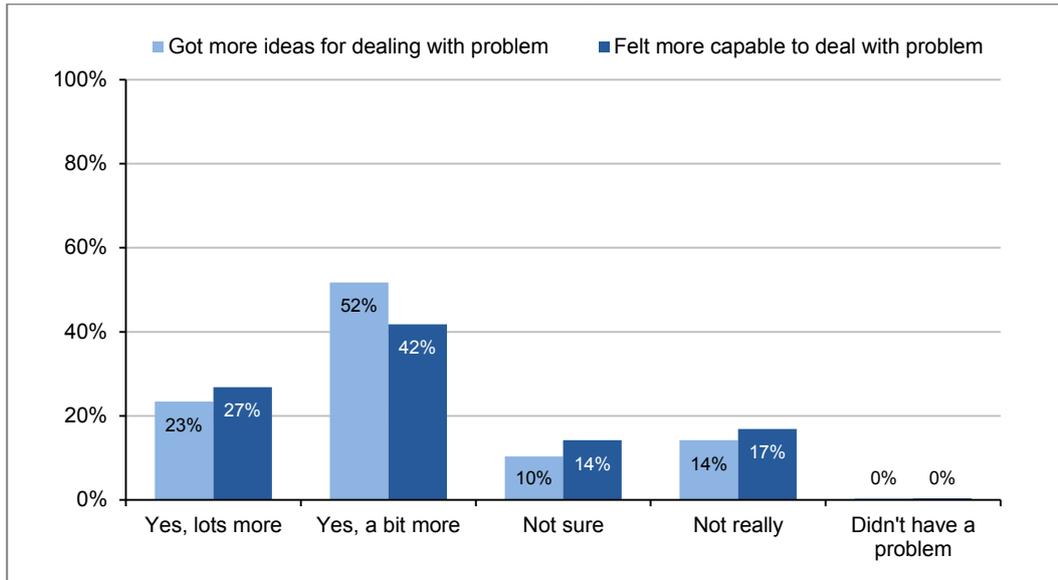
5.3.3 Perceived impact of Kids Helpline counselling and support service

Respondents who reported contacting the counselling and support service (n = 261) were asked two questions to gauge the effectiveness of the support provided:

- Last time you spoke to a counsellor (by phone, email or web chat) did you get ideas for how to deal with your problems?
- After you last spoke to a counsellor (by phone, email or web chat) did you feel more capable of dealing with your problems than before?

Figure 38 summarises respondents' answers to these questions. Three out of four respondents (75%) reported having more ideas for dealing with their problems after speaking to a counsellor and more than two out of three (69%) felt more capable of dealing with their problems.

Figure 38. Perceived impacts of last session talking to a counsellor (n = 261)¹



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

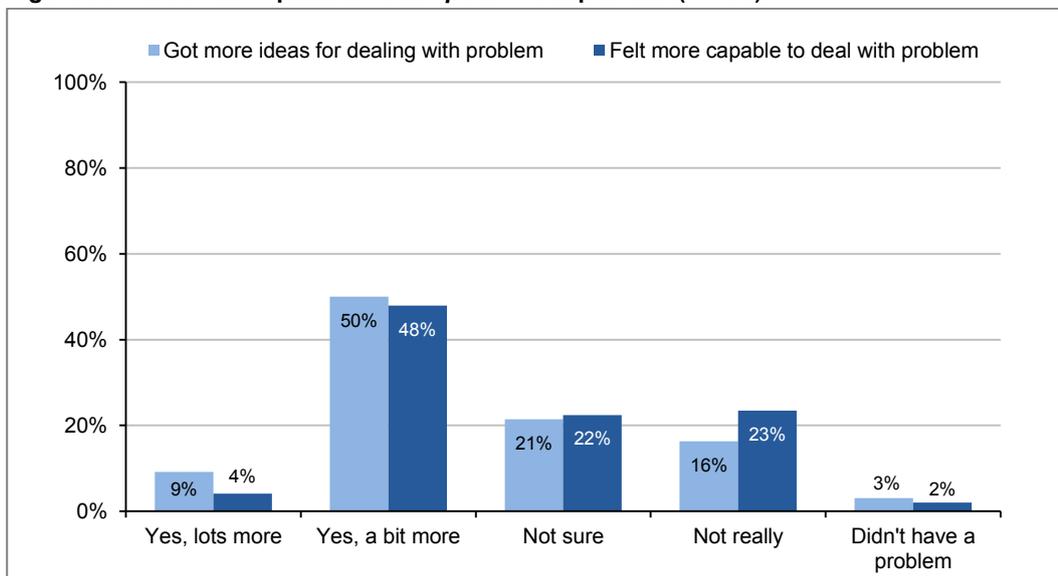
5.3.4 Perceived impact of *Tips & Info*

Respondents who reported having read *Tips & Info* on the website in the last 12 months (n = 98) were asked two questions to gauge the impact of the support provided:

- Last time you read a *Tips & Info* topic did you get ideas for how to deal with your problems?
- After you last read a *Tips & Info* topic did you feel more capable of dealing with your problems than before?

Figure 39 summarises respondents' answers to these questions. Three out of five respondents (59%) reported having more ideas for dealing with their problems after reading a *Tips & Info* topics and just more than half (52%) felt more capable of dealing with their problems.

Figure 39. Perceived impacts of last *Tips & Info* topic read (n = 98)¹



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

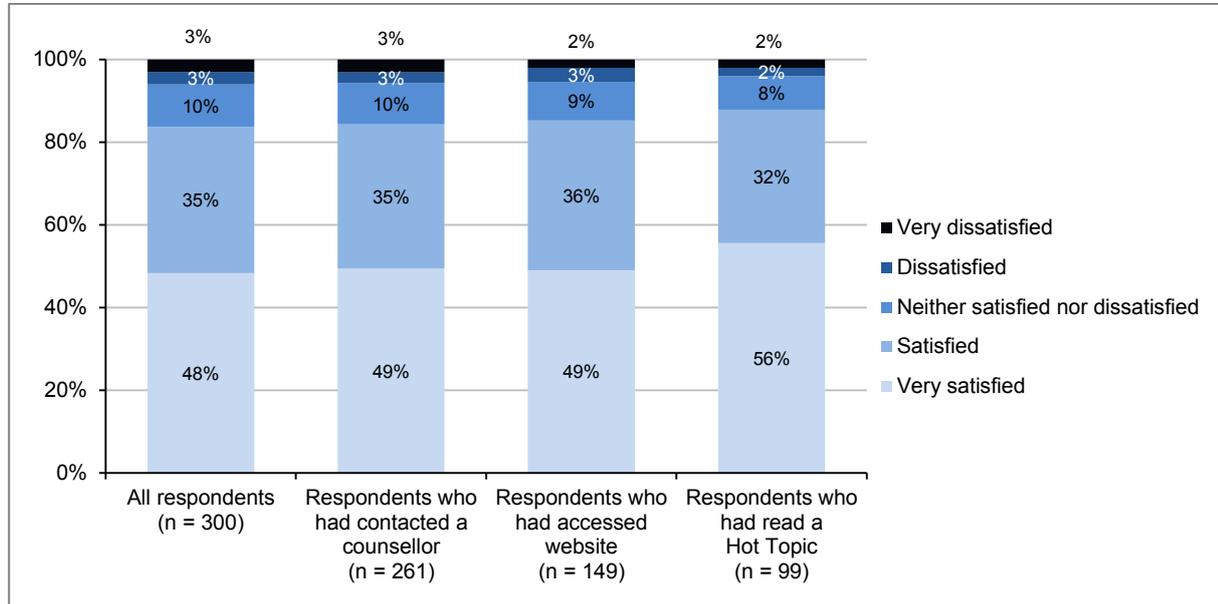
5.3.5 Overall satisfaction

To gauge overall satisfaction with Kids Helpline, respondents were asked two questions:

- How satisfied are you with Kids Helpline? (five-point response scale)
- Would you recommend Kids Helpline to a friend? (yes/no)

A total of 275 out of 297 respondents (93%) said they would recommend Kids Helpline to a friend. Figure 40 shows young people's responses to the five-point satisfaction question based on the kind of engagement they reported having with Kids Helpline in the last 12 months. Across all respondents, 84% reported that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with Kids Helpline, while 6% indicated they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with Kids Helpline. These proportions were similar for all three user groups.

Figure 40. Overall satisfaction with Kids Helpline – all respondents and by types of service engagement¹



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

6. A statistical snapshot of 25 years of service to the community

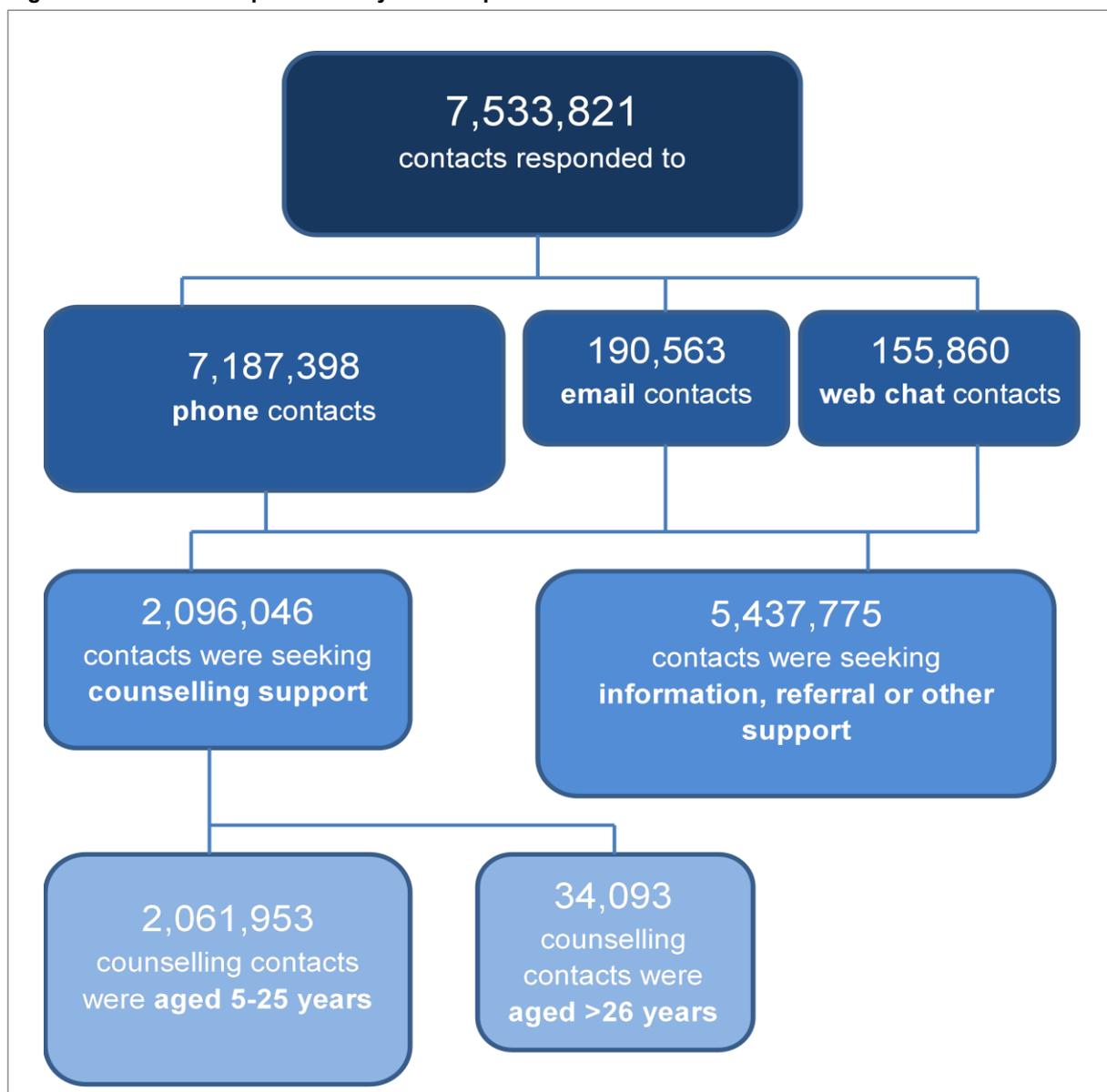
The 25th anniversary of Kids Helpline takes place on 25 March, 2016. A special anniversary report will be released later in 2016 to mark this occasion and document the first quarter-century of this landmark national service for children and young people.

The current chapter is a special inclusion in this year's *Overview* to acknowledge and celebrate this milestone. It provides a brief statistical snapshot of the services Kids Helpline has delivered to the community over the last 25 years and offers some preliminary insights into the changing profile and needs of children and young people contacting the service over this time.

6.1 Scale of services delivered

From 25 March 1991 until 31 December 2015, Kids Helpline has responded to more than seven and half million (7,533,821) contacts from children and young people, as shown in Figure 41. Ninety-five per cent (7,187,398) of these contacts were received via phone and the remainder by email (190,563) or web chat (155,860).

Figure 41. Contacts responded to by Kids Helpline – 1991 to 2015



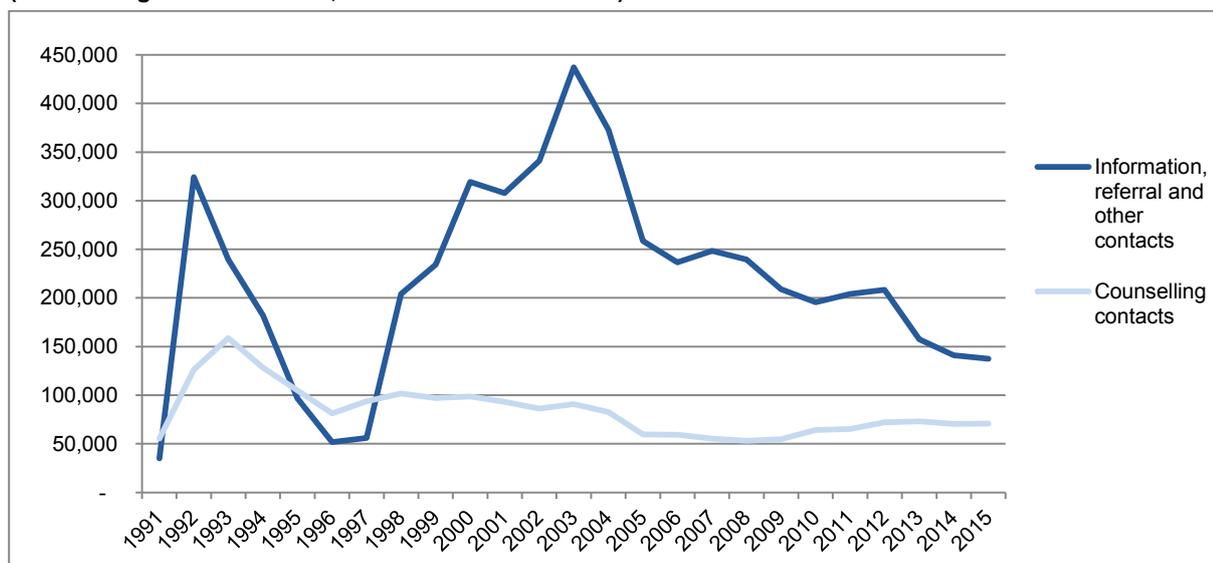
This is equivalent to responding to a contact from a child or young person every 1.7 minutes continuously for 25 years.

Just over a quarter (28%, or 2,096,046) of contacts were seeking counselling support, while the remainder (72%, or 5,437,775 contacts) were seeking information, referral or other forms of non-counselling support. Almost all counselling contacts (98%, or 2,061,953 contacts) were from children and young people aged 5-25 years.

6.2 Trends in demand for counselling vs. non-counselling support

Over the last quarter century there has been considerable variation in the demand for non-counselling type responses (i.e. children and young people seeking information, referral and other kinds of non-counselling support), as shown in Figure 42. Demand for counselling responses has been comparatively more stable, particularly from 1995 onwards.

Figure 42. Number of Kids Helpline contacts aged 5-25 years – by year and by type of service required (counselling vs. information, referral or other contact)



1. Counts of non-counselling number before 1997 are estimates based on available information.

It is important to note that counselling contacts have themselves changed in nature over the last 25 years, as outlined in sections 2.1.3 and 2.1.4. The average duration of a counselling contact in 1991 was 10 minutes while in 2015 it was 36 minutes (Figure 5). The total annual client contact time has been increasing steadily over the last decade notwithstanding the falling number of contacts responded to owing to the more complex, time-intensive responses being required by counselling contacts (Figure 4).

6.3 Change and continuity in client profile

6.3.1 Data availability

Detailed client data are not available for non-counselling contacts prior to 2000, so the trend analysis presented in this section in relation to the characteristics of children and young people contacting the service over the last 25 years is limited to the 28% of contacts ($N=2,096,046$) who contacted Kids Helpline for counselling support.

This focus is not without justification or validity, however. While counselling contacts have only constituted just over a quarter of Kids Helpline contacts in 25 years, they have accounted for the vast majority of counsellor-client direct contact time, as outlined earlier in section 2.1.4 (Figure 4) on session length. They are also the contacts for whom the fullest data have been collected permitting relatively reliable and rich data analysis. Non-counselling contacts, by contrast, are often brief or anonymous interactions that result in high levels of missing data which can seriously compromise the reliability of analyses performed.

6.3.2 Demographic profile of counselling contacts

Table 15 summarises the demographic characteristics of Kids Helpline counselling contacts over the first five years of the service (1991-1995) and compares this with the demographic profile of counselling contacts over the most recent five year period (2011-2015). This analysis indicates there have been significant shifts in the demographic profile of contacts seeking counselling support from Kids Helpline over the last 25 years.

Key observations from Table 15 include the following:

- *Gender.* There has been a moderate increase in the proportion of females contacting the service for counselling from the first five-year period until the most recent period (67% to 81%) and a corresponding decrease in males seeking counselling (33% to 19%).
- *Age.* Counselling contacts have increased in age on average from a mean of 14 years in 1991-1995 to 17 years in 2011-2015. In 1991-1995, 5-12 year olds made up a quarter (26%) of all counselling contacts. In the 2011-2015 period, they made up 10%. In the first five years of the service only 1 in 50 (2%) counselling contacts were aged over 18 years; in the most recent five-year period, three in 10 (29%) counselling contacts were aged over 18. These observations reflect an extension of service eligibility from 18 to 25 years from 2003 onwards.
- *Schooling status.* The changing schooling status of counselling contacts closely reflects the ageing profile of counselling contacts. In the first five years of the service, three out of every four counselling contacts (75%) were students at secondary school and only 1% were enrolled in post-secondary education. By contrast, over the last five years, only about half of counselling contacts reported being at secondary school while 18% indicated being engaged in post-secondary education.
- *Cultural background.* The proportion of counselling contacts known to be from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds has increased considerably from the first five years (3%) of the service to the most recent five years (28%), while the proportion of those known to be neither CALD nor Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander has decreased substantially (from 95% to 60%).
- *State.* Kids Helpline gradually expanded across Australian states and territories from March 1991 to April 1993. This is reflected in the state breakdown of contacts during the first five years of the service, where two fifths (42%) of counselling contacts came from Queensland, the state in which the service commenced. The proportional breakdown for states in the most recent five-year period closely matches the Australian population for residents aged 5-25 years by state, as shown in Table 5.
- *Locality/remoteness.* There has been a moderate increase in the proportion of counselling contacts living in Major Cities (from 60% in 1991-1995 to 72% in 2011-2015) with corresponding decreases in the proportions of counselling contacts living in both Inner Regional and Outer Regional/Remote localities (from 24% to 19% and 16% to 9% respectively).

Table 15. Characteristics of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – comparing the first five years of the service (1991 to 1995) and the most recent five years (2011-2015)^{1,2}

Contact characteristics	First five years (1991-1995) (N = 570,032)		Most recent five years (2011-2015) (N = 348,346)	
	n	col. %	n	col. %
Gender				
Female	380,692	67%	274,158	81%
Male	183,880	33%	62,361	19%
Total	564,572	100%	336,519	100%
Unknown	5,460		11,366	
Mean age and age group				
Mean age in years (standard deviation)	14 (2)		17 (4)	
5-12 years	127,339	26%	32,806	10%
13-18 years	354,254	72%	188,985	60%
19-25 years	9,453	2%	91,280	29%
Total	491,046	100%	313,071	100%
<26 but age unknown	78,986		35,275	
Schooling status				
Primary school	18,643	17%	13,297	8%
Secondary school	84,122	75%	88,685	54%
Special/alternative/home schooling ³	-	-	3,671	2%
Not at school	8,815	8%	29,478	18%
Post-secondary education/training	1,172	1%	30,012	18%
Total	112,752	100%	165,143	100%
Unknown	457,280		183,119	
Cultural background²				
Aboriginal &/or TSI	4,003	2%	3,546	3%
CALD	6,705	3%	38,469	28%
Neither ATSI nor CALD	187,564	95%	93,441	69%
Total	198,272	100%	135,456	100%
Unknown	371,760		212,890	
State				
ACT (from April 1993)	4,500	1%	4,999	2%
NSW (from April 1993)	45,439	15%	98,316	33%
NT (from September 1991)	4,770	2%	1,679	1%
QLD (from March 1991)	129,647	42%	63,342	21%
SA (from August 1992)	12,142	4%	20,954	7%
TAS (from August 1992)	14,153	5%	6,311	2%
VIC (from October 1991)	80,163	26%	81,820	27%
WA (from March 1993)	19,597	6%	22,277	7%
Total	310,411	100%	299,698	100%
Unknown	259,621		48,648	
Remoteness				
Major Cities	141,087	60%	108,434	72%
Inner Regional	56,737	24%	29,307	19%
Outer Regional/Remote	38,207	16%	13,636	9%
Total	236,031	100%	151,377	100%
Unknown	334,001		196,969	

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. This data collection field was not in existence between 1991 and 1995.

6.4 Change and continuity in the concerns of counselling contacts

6.4.1 Most common concerns of children and young people over time

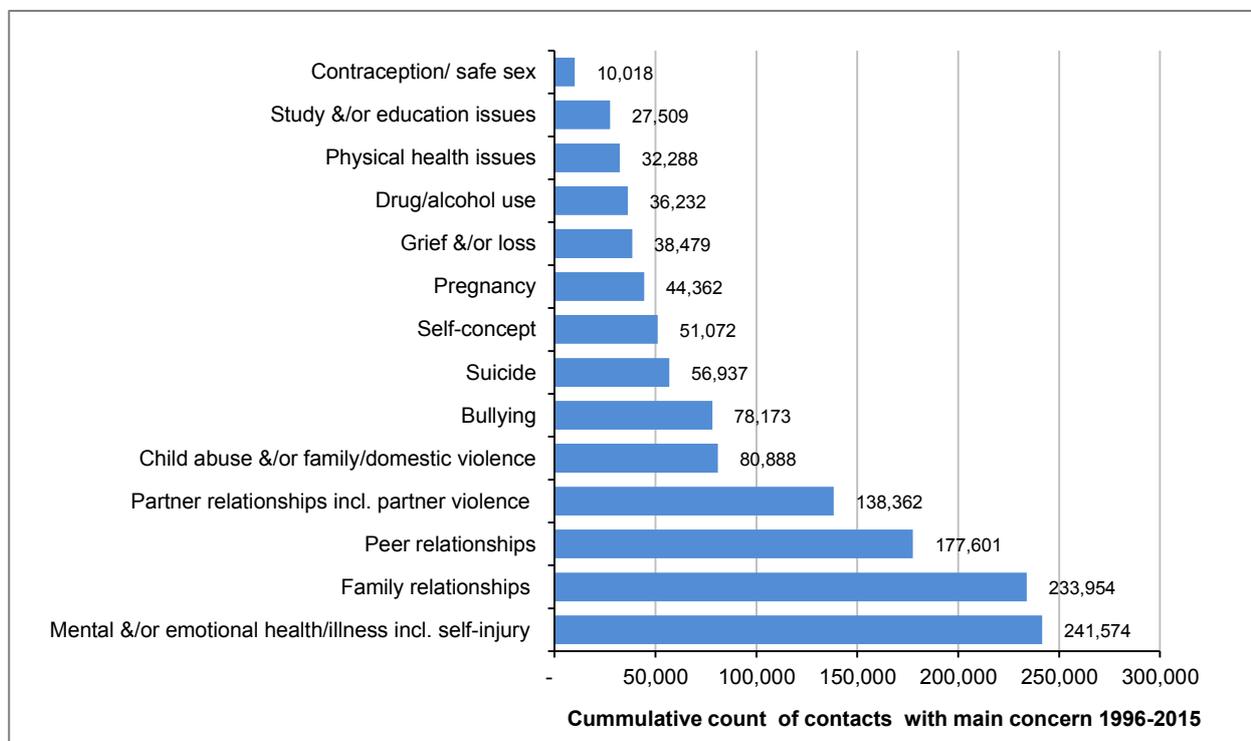
Since 1996, there have been two classification systems used for recording the help-seeking concerns of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline, one operating from 10 May 1996 until 31 December 2011, and a new classification system introduced from 1 January 2012. A number of concern categories are sufficiently similar to permit analysis of trends over the entire period from 1996 to 2015. Others have been recoded into *continuous concern categories* by joining various concern types together during the two periods. A total of 14 continuous concern categories have been generated in this way and analysed over time.

Because there have been different numbers of fields for recording client concerns over the years – from one field initially, to two in 2002, to four in 2012, analysis of concerns over time is limited to the *primary* or *main* concern recorded. These 14 continuous concern categories collectively account for 85% of main concerns recorded (or 1,247,449 counselling contacts out of 1,459,225 received between May 1996 and December 2015).

Figure 43 shows the main concern of Kids Helpline counselling contacts cumulatively over the 20-year period from 1996 to 2015. It shows that the concerns Kids Helpline has received most contacts about are, in order of frequency:

- Mental and/or emotional health/illness, including self-injury (17% of counselling contacts received over the period)
- Family relationships (16%)
- Peer relationships (12%)
- Partner relationships, including partner violence (9%)
- Child abuse and/or family/domestic violence (6%)
- Bullying (5%), and
- Suicide (4%)

Figure 43. Main concern of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – cumulative counts of contacts 1996-2015¹



1. Counts of counselling contacts with these 14 continuous concern categories sum to 1,247,449 which comprises 85% of counselling contacts received from May 1996 to December 2015 (N = 1,459,225).

6.4.2 Trend analysis of counselling contacts' main concern

Over the 20 year period, there have been continuities and changes evident in the frequency with which particular concerns have been brought for counselling by children and young people. Table 16 shows the frequency with which each of the 14 continuous concern categories have been recorded as the main concern of counselling contacts over this period in five-yearly intervals. It also provides the percentage change in the frequency with which these concerns were recorded as contacts' main concern from the first five-year period to the most recent five-year period.

Table 16. Percentage change in number of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – by main concern in 5-yearly intervals^{1,2}

Main concern of counselling contact (continuous concern categories)	Number of contacts with this main concern by 5-year periods				% change from 1996-2000 to 2011-2015
	1996-2000	2001-2005	2006-2010	2011-2015	
Mental &/or emotional health/illness incl. self-injury	15,361	43,924	70,760	111,529	626%
Family relationships	71,950	67,587	45,985	48,432	-33%
Peer relationships	63,228	61,015	27,151	26,207	-59%
Partner relationships incl. partner violence	44,552	38,283	24,168	31,359	-30%
Child abuse &/or family/domestic violence	29,911	20,032	14,512	16,433	-45%
Bullying	24,614	27,713	12,066	13,780	-44%
Suicide	8,014	10,618	10,616	27,689	246%
Self-concept	15,458	12,802	8,227	14,585	-6%
Pregnancy	20,645	13,792	5,925	4,000	-81%
Grief &/or loss	11,329	11,372	7,456	8,322	-27%
Drug/alcohol use	16,057	11,273	4,921	3,981	-75%
Physical health issues	10,454	8,909	6,155	6,770	-35%
Study &/or education issues	5,983	6,661	5,441	9,424	58%
Contraception/ safe sex	5,100	3,447	921	550	-89%

1. Counts of counselling contacts with these 14 continuous concern categories sum to 1,247,449 which comprises 85% of counselling contacts received from mid-1996 to 2015 ($N = 1,459,247$).

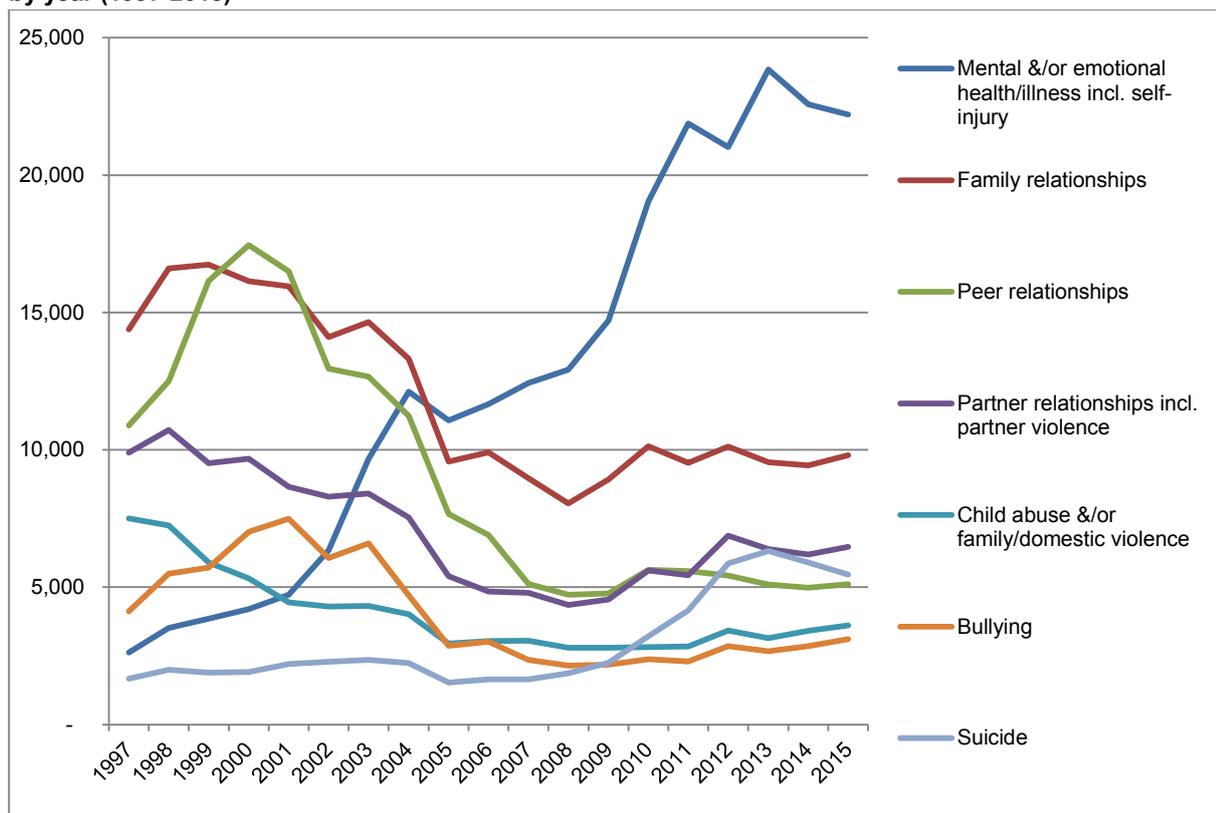
2. Total counselling contacts per five-year period are as follows: $N(1996-2000) = 433,481$; $N(2001-2005) = 400,612$; $N(2006-2010) = 276,808$; $N(2011-2015) = 348,346$.

Figure 44 provides a visual representation of this continuity and change in counselling contacts' main concern focusing on the seven most frequently recorded of the 14 continuous concern categories.

Key points to note from the data in Table 16 and Figure 44 include the following:

- *Family relationships, peer relationships and partner relationships, including partner violence*, were the three most common categories of main concern in the first five years of the 20-year period and in the most recent five-year period all three remained among the five most common categories of main concern. This suggests a great deal of continuity overall in the concerns that children and young people contact Kids Helpline about.
- Ten of the 14 main concern categories show a percentage decrease over time. This is to be expected to some extent as counselling contacts have reduced overall by 25% from 1996-2000 to 2011-2015.
- Notwithstanding the overall percentage decrease in counselling contacts, three categories of concern show substantial and noteworthy percentage increases, namely:
 - a 626% increase in the frequency with which issues regarding mental and/or emotional health or illness, including self-injury, have been recorded as the contact's main concern
 - a 246% increase in the frequency with which concern about suicide has been raised for counselling, and
 - a 58% increase in the frequency with which study and/or education issues have been discussed with counsellors as the main concern of the client.

Figure 44. Main concern of Kids Helpline counselling contacts aged 5-25 years – number of counselling contacts by year (1997-2015)¹



1. Data provided for the seven most common of 14 continuous concern categories from 1997-2015.

6.4.3 Some explanations for observed trends

It may seem logical to conclude from the trend analysis presented in Table 17 and Figure 44 that there has been an explosion in the mental health needs and suicide concerns of children and young people over the last decade. While there may be genuine increases in these needs, it is difficult to conclude this from the data because a range of other factors have clearly and significantly contributed to the observed trends and may indeed account for them entirely. Almost all of these factors concern innovations in the operation of Kids Helpline to improve responsiveness to client need:

- In 2003, Kids Helpline expanded its service to include children and young people aged 19-25 years. Concern with mental health issues is strongly and positively correlated with age, as shown earlier in this report (see Figures 13 and 15). Further analysis of concern data shows that most of the increase in concern regarding 'mental &/or emotional health/illness including self-injury' since around 2004 is attributable to the inclusion of this older age group. This is also the case to some extent in relation to counselling contacts' concern with suicide.
- In the early 2000s, Kids Helpline increased the professional training requirements for its counsellors including mandatory training in the symptoms of common mental health disorders. Over a number of years, counsellors were all required to achieve relevant tertiary-level counselling qualifications to support their practice. These changes in staff training and qualifications almost certainly resulted in counsellors increasingly recognising, responding to, and recording mental health concerns among children and young people contacting the service.
- During the 2000s, in tandem with the professionalisation of counsellors, the service expanded its provision of case management services to children and young people with more complex issues, such as ongoing mental health conditions. This service model, where individual children and young people can receive regular and at times intensive support from counsellors in relation to certain issues, inevitably results in increased numbers of contacts about those more complex issues. Further analysis of main concern data by client status as a *first time* or *repeat contact* reveals that much of the growth in numbers of contacts concerned about 'mental and/or emotional health/illness including self-injury' and 'suicide' is attributable to repeat contacts, corresponding to individuals who are more likely to be receiving case management support.

- Over the last 20 years, and particularly over the last 10 years, there has been growing awareness and increasing acceptance of mental health issues in the community. This social and cultural change is likely to have increased children and young people's recognition of these issues in themselves and/or their willingness to seek help for themselves.

6.4.4 Further information

During the course of 2016, **yourtown** intends to release further analyses from Kids Helpline's data archive to inform important debates and discussions about:

- the contemporary nature of children and young people's help-seeking and how best to engage and support these help-seekers
- the ongoing development of Kids Helpline, and
- its unique place in the evolving system of mental health and support services for children and young people in the Australian community.

Please visit our website to monitor the release of these publications (www.yourtown.com.au).

7. Conclusion

This report has provided a comprehensive statistical overview of the activities of Kids Helpline during 2015, presenting a wide range of information about services delivered, demand for services, client needs and characteristics, and client satisfaction and perception of service impact. It has also provided short- and longer-term trend analysis on a number of measures to help identify emerging issues in service demand and delivery.

This concluding section:

- draws together key themes from the data
- highlights other publications in the series that may be of interest to readers, and
- invites readers to assist Kids Helpline to continue and extend the critical support it provides to vulnerable young Australians.

7.1 Key themes from the data

Various themes emerge from reviewing the data presented in the 2015 *Overview* report. What follows are four particularly noteworthy themes.

Theme 1 Kids Helpline plays a comprehensive role in protecting young Australians from abuse and harm

Taken together, the chapters of this report highlight the multifaceted role that Kids Helpline continues to play in protecting children and young people from harm. The child protection work of the service includes primary, secondary and tertiary prevention activities:

- *Primary prevention* activities are universal or non-targeted services for children and young people that aim to reduce their vulnerability to abuse and other harms. Kids Helpline's primary prevention activities include:
 - *information, referral and counselling support* for children and young people via phone, web chat and email any time of the day in relation to any issue
 - *age-appropriate self-help resources on the Kids Helpline website* for children, teenagers and adults covering a wide range of topics including topics focused on building children and young people's resilience and on keeping children and young people safe – from bullying, relationship violence, child abuse, domestic violence, risky behaviour and online harassment, and
 - *the Kids Helpline @ School program*, which aims to build children and young people's resilience, help-seeking behaviours, coping strategies and knowledge of sources of help, with a focus on preventing and responding to negative online experiences.
- *Secondary prevention* activities are targeted at those experiencing abuse or harm or at imminent risk of abuse or harm and aim to protect children and young people from further or more serious impact. Kids Helpline's secondary prevention activities include providing crisis responses and duty of care interventions via phone, web chat and email to children and young people experiencing or at significant risk of child abuse, family/domestic violence, suicide and self-injury:
 - *Child abuse and family/domestic violence*. 5,462 contacts were received from children and young people with child abuse concerns in 2015, including domestic and family violence. Of these, one in three (67%) called because they were currently experiencing abuse or were at risk of abuse.
 - *Suicide*. 7,562 contacts were received from children and young people with suicide-related concerns in 2015. Of these, more than three in four (77%) called to discuss current suicidal thoughts or fears, while one in 12 (8%) either had immediate intentions of suicide or was attempting suicide at the time of the call.
 - *Self injury*. 4,466 contacts were received from children and young people with self-injury concerns in 2015. Of these, almost four in five (78%) were contacting for support to avoid acts of self-injury, while one in 25 (4%) were in need of medical assistance following self-injury.
 - *Duty of care interventions*. There were 1,720 instances where Kids Helpline counsellors contacted emergency services or other agencies to help protect a child or young person experiencing or at imminent risk of significant harm in 2015. That's more than 30 interventions a week. In 2015, 39% of all duty of care interventions initiated by Kids Helpline counsellors were precipitated by child abuse concerns and 33% by suicide attempts.

- *Tertiary prevention* activities are targeted at those already impacted by abuse or harm and aim to help them manage or recover from these experiences. Tertiary prevention activities offered by Kids Helpline include counselling in relation to past abuse as well as case management support to assist children and young people with complex or ongoing issues associated with past trauma and abuse.
 - *Support with past abuse.* In 2015, 22% of all contacts received from children and young people about child abuse (N = 5,462) were seeking support in relation to the impacts of past abuse.
 - *Support with ongoing issues.* Child abuse is strongly associated with long term negative impacts on social and emotional wellbeing and functioning. Children and young people who have experienced abuse and/or are being impacted by these experiences can receive ongoing counselling support and case management if they would like this. The most common concern of ongoing support clients in 2015 was mental health (28% of ongoing support clients), followed by emotional wellbeing concerns (21%). Seven per cent of ongoing support contacts called Kids Helpline to talk specifically about child abuse.
 - *Self-help resources on the Kids Helpline website.* Many of the self-help resources developed for specific age groups on the Kids Helpline website are focused on mental and emotional wellbeing topics that may be relevant to children and young people who have experienced abuse or trauma – like anxiety, depression, self-harm, suicide, social anxiety, loneliness, etc. These resources link children and young people to further information and professional support if they are experiencing ongoing issues.

Theme 2 Continuing shifts in the nature of children and young people’s help-seeking

The short- and longer-term trend data on service usage presented in this report highlight ongoing shifts in the nature of children and young people’s help-seeking in Australia. These shifts can be summarised as follows:

Children and young people’s preferences for receiving information-based support are shifting away from in-person delivery to internet-based provision

- Over the last three years there has been a decrease of 13% in the number of contacts received by the counselling and support service for information, referrals and other non-counselling support. In raw numbers, this is a reduction of approximately 20,000 contacts over three years (see Figure 2).
- Over the same period, there has been an increase of 35% in the number of unique visitors to the Kids Helpline website. In raw numbers, this is an increase of approximately 185,000 unique visitors over three years. Annual page views of *Tips & Info* topics for teens have almost doubled during this period, from 174,297 to 312,619 and page views of *Tips & Info* for kids have increased by 44%, from 33,344 to 48,033.
- This trend has been going on for over a decade (Figure 42) and undoubtedly mirrors broader social changes underway with the growth of the internet as a source of information for a broad range of help-seeking.

There is a gradual but steady shift in children and young people’s medium of preference for contacting a counsellor – away from telephone and email towards web chat, and away from landlines to mobile phones

- Over the last decade, the proportion of contacts from children and young people seeking counselling support whose preferred medium is phone has decreased from 78% in 2006 to 61% in 2015 (see Figure 9).
- The proportion seeking counselling via web chat has increased from 8% to 23% (see Figure 9). Between 2013 and 2015, every subgroup of the Kids Helpline population analysed (i.e. both males and females, all age groups, contacts from all remoteness categories, both counselling and non-counselling contacts, etc.), with the exception of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, slightly or moderately increased their preference for web chat while reducing their preference for either phone- or email-based contact or both.
- Over the last three years, the proportion of phone attempts from mobile phones compared with landlines continued to increase (from 73% in 2013 to 77% in 2015). This trend away from landlines towards mobiles has been going on for over a decade. In 2002, 96% of all phone attempts were from landlines and only 4% were from mobiles.
- These shifts in medium of preference for contacting a counsellor most likely reflect growing levels of mobile and internet-based social communication and interaction in the population and particularly among children and young people growing up in the current technological environment.

The intensity of support required by those contacting the counselling and support service is steadily increasing

- With the gradual shift in demand for information and referral support away from in-person delivery to internet-based delivery, the proportion of contacts approaching Kids Helpline for counselling support – the more intensive kind of support provided by the service – has steadily increased, from 18% of all contacts in 2007 to 34% of all contacts in 2015. Counselling contacts have not just increased as a proportion of all contacts during this period, but in terms of raw counts. From 2007 to 2015, there has been an increase of 32% in the number of counselling contacts responded to (from 53,168 in 2007 to 70,210 in 2015).
- In addition, the average length of counselling sessions has been steadily increasing over time. In 1991 counselling sessions were 10 minutes on average; in 2015 they were 36 minutes (Figure 5).
- Increasing session lengths are associated with changes in the types of issues being brought for counselling by children and young people. From 1996 to 2015, there was a 626% increase in the number of counselling contacts responded to where the client's main concern was 'mental and/or emotional health or illness, including self injury'. During this time there was also a 246% increase in the number of counselling sessions where the client's main concern was suicide. Counselling sessions in relation to these issues are longer on average owing to their comparative complexity and the need to provide the child or young person with sufficient space and time to discuss these issues.
- As noted in Chapter 6, shifts in the frequency with which particular issues are brought by children and young people for counselling reflect innovations in service delivery designed to respond better to these more complex presentations. These innovations include extending age eligibility for service from 18 to 25 years, upgrading the professional skills and qualifications of counsellors, and expanding the provision of case management services to children and young people who would be assisted by more intensive or ongoing support from counsellors.
- The number of duty of care interventions initiated by Kids Helpline counsellors to protect a child or young person experiencing significant harm or at imminent risk of significant harm has also been steadily increasing in recent years. Over the last three years, this number increased by 12% (from 1,536 in 2013 to 1,720 in 2015). Child abuse and suicide attempts are the most common reasons for duty of care interventions.

Theme 3 Unique insights into the contemporary help-seeking concerns of young Australians

This report summarises data in relation to the help-seeking needs and concerns of Kids Helpline counselling and support service contacts (non-counselling contacts in section 2.3 and counselling contacts in sections 2.5 and 2.6) and the topics of interest to self-directed help-seekers accessing the Kids Helpline website (section 3.2). Together this information provides unique and valuable insights into the most common issues for which young Australians currently seek help.

Concerns of children and young people contacting the Kids Helpline counselling and support service

- The most common concerns of counselling contacts in 2015 were *mental health issues* (22%), *family relationship issues* (19%), *emotional wellbeing* (18%), *suicide* (11%) and *dating and partner relationships* (11%).
- The frequency with which these five issues have been raised by children and young people for counselling have remained the same in the short term (2013-2015).
- While there is relative stability in the frequency with which particular issues of concern are being raised with counsellors by the client population, this population is far from homogenous in its help-seeking concerns. Chapter 2 demonstrates that the concerns of counselling contacts vary:
 - greatly according to their age group and cultural background
 - moderately according to their gender, and
 - slightly according to their chosen medium of contact.Remoteness classification appeared to have negligible association with the concerns for which children and young people were seeking counselling support, however.

Concerns/interests of children and young people visiting the Kids Helpline website

- The most frequently viewed kids *Tips & Info* topics in 2015 were *staying safe online*, *taking risks*, *fights with friends*, *bullying*, and *feeling sad*. The first four of these issues were the most frequently visited topics in 2014 as well, suggesting some continuity in the issues of concern to children visiting the site.

- The most frequently viewed teens *Tips & Info* topics in 2015 were *peer pressure, leaving home, body image, resilience* and *risky behaviour*. The topics peer pressure, leaving home and body image were also among the five most frequently visited teens *Tips & Info* topics in 2014, again suggesting some stability in the issues of interest to website visitors of this age group.
- The most common sources of referral to the website in 2015 were youth and generalist mental health and counselling websites and cyber-safety and anti-bullying websites. These were also the most common sources of referral in 2014, providing another insight into the issues of concern for children and young people searching the web for resources to help them understand and manage issues impacting on them.

Theme 4 Critical importance of program evaluation and client feedback

In this complex and changing landscape of client needs and preferences, this report emphasises the importance of undertaking ongoing outcome evaluation and investigation of client satisfaction in addition to analysing service trends. This is because services like Kids Helpline need not only to understand the specific help-seeking interests and concerns of our clients and how they want to receive information and support, but to make sure that the resources and support we provide actually meet their needs and make a difference in their lives. To this extent, we believe service users provide an essential perspective in assessing the quality, accessibility, usability and effectiveness of services delivered.

Kids Helpline and **yourtown** have demonstrated a strong commitment to service evaluation and client feedback both through the preparation and dissemination of this report and through the various evaluation activities reported here. The analysis of client feedback and other evaluation measures reported in relation to the Kids Helpline counselling and support service, the Kids Helpline website, and the Kids Helpline @ School program, all indicate that these initiatives are going a considerable way towards providing clients with the kind of resources that they need and that can make a difference in their lives.

To continue to meet these needs into the future, **yourtown** is committed to ongoing evaluation and innovation, and to communicating what we learn in this process with others supporting young Australians in need of help.

7.2 Other publications on Kids Helpline in 2015

This report is part of a suite of publications produced by **yourtown** about Kids Helpline in 2015. In addition to this *National Statistical Overview* report, **yourtown** has prepared the following publications:

- The *Kids Helpline Insights 2015* which provides a summary of headline data from this report as well as information about:
 - how Kids Helpline and **yourtown** advocate to improve services for and policies impacting on vulnerable young Australians
 - how **yourtown** collaborates with government, business and the community to maximise the reach and quality of the services it delivers to children and young people
 - service users' needs and experiences, drawn from case studies and young people's own stories, and
 - innovations and developments in service delivery to improve our responsiveness to the needs of children and young people contacting Kids Helpline.
- *Kids Helpline Insights 2015 – Statistical Summary Report* for each state and territory. These reports includes presentation of:
 - the demographic characteristics of Kids Helpline contacts from that state or territory in 2015 with comparison to contacts from the rest of Australia
 - a three-year trend analysis of the demographic characteristics of contacts from that state or territory
 - the most common concerns of counselling contacts responded to from that state or territory compared with the concerns of counselling contacts from the rest of Australia
 - a three-year trend analysis of the most common concerns of counselling contacts from that state or territory, and
 - a three-year trend analysis of all concerns raised by counselling contacts from that state or territory.
- In addition to these publications, **yourtown** routinely publishes *research articles, information sheets* and *policy advocacy papers* based on analysis of specific Kids Helpline data as appropriate to the topic.

All publications are available from the **yourtown** website.

7.3 How to support Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline costs \$11 million a year to operate. **yourtown** provides approximately 70% of the funding thanks to the generosity of supporters of the Art Union, donations and corporate support. The Australian, Queensland, Western Australian and Victorian Governments contributed the remaining 30% in 2015.

Despite the generosity of the community and governments, Kids Helpline is unable to meet the current demand from children and young people for counselling and other support. On average, a child or young person makes contact with the Kids Helpline counselling and support service every 90 seconds but many of these contacts we are still unable to respond to.

“We care and we listen, any time and for any reason.” This is the promise Kids Helpline has made to the children and young people of Australia. Please help us to keep this promise by donating today:
www.kidshelp.com.au/donate

8. Appendix

8.1 Notes regarding data collection, analysis and interpretation

8.1.1 Limitations on counselling service data collection

Kids Helpline counsellors record information at the end of every telephone, web chat or email session. There are a maximum of 38 different fields where data may be logged; however, only 10 are mandatory (including date, time, length of session, frequency of contact, main concern or problem, problem severity, referral, and whether or not the child or young person was experiencing current thoughts of suicide, was engaged in deliberate self-injury or was assessed to have a mental health disorder or symptoms consistent with a mental health disorder).

Ideally, counsellors enter information for each field. In reality, however, the amount of information recorded about each session varies due to the following:

- *Privacy and confidentiality* – Kids Helpline offers itself to children and young people as a private and confidential service. Frequently clients choose not to reveal details about themselves, particularly those that might compromise their anonymity.
- *Sensitivity of information* – the nature of some contacts is such that direct information gathering is not advisable, appropriate or possible.
- *The length or nature of the call* – at times even basic data collection is impossible or irrelevant.

Percentages and proportions presented in this report are based on those contacts for whom information is available. Most tables indicate the number of contacts where data is missing and all figures report the size of the population or subpopulation for whom data is available (*N*). Where missing data is substantial, this can therefore be identified.

8.1.2 Analysis

Most of the analysis presented in this report is in the form of frequencies and/or percentages of Kids Helpline contacts meeting particular criteria. Sometimes percentages in tables are calculated by row and sometimes by column depending on the purpose of the analysis. This will be indicated in the table header (either *col. %* or *row %*). Percentages are almost always provided as rounded integers, so where column or row percentages sum to slightly more or less than 100%, this is due to rounding.

Another reason that percentages may sum to more than 100% is where data collection fields permit multiple responses. Many of the figures presented in the report show the percentage of groups of counselling contacts with specific concerns. Because counsellors can record up to four concerns per contact, percentage frequencies in these figures will exceed 100% in most cases.

Subgroup analysis

Subgroup analysis is undertaken extensively in Chapter 2, comparing Kids Helpline counselling contacts by age group, gender, cultural background, remoteness of locality, type of support relationship to the service, and so on. Note that statistical significance is not reported for any subgroup comparisons as all the data in this chapter pertain to the population of Kids Helpline contacts in 2015, not samples of this population.

Short-term trend analysis

Changes in a range of client characteristics, client demand and service delivery variables are analysed over the last three years (2013-2015) for the most part. Occasionally trends are analysed over a longer period of time where this is possible and necessary to understanding shifts occurring in service delivery. Again, statistical significance is not reported in these analyses as the data analysed concern the population of Kids Helpline contacts during this period, not samples of this population.

Remoteness analysis

Throughout Chapter 2, client characteristics and concerns are analysed by remoteness of locality. This analysis is based on an adaptation of the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) currently used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). This adaptation involves attributing a categorical descriptor of remoteness to each Australian postcode – Major City, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, Very Remote – based on the majority categorisation of the postcode under the ASGS. So where a postcode may have been classified under the ASGS as 45% Inner Regional and 55% Outer Regional, in the current analysis the postcode would be classified as Outer Regional. Accordingly, the analysis of remoteness is approximate and may potentially obscure or misrepresent location-based differences.⁴

In addition, postcode information is available for just under half (48%) of counselling contacts in 2015 and there are likely to be biases associated with missing and known data. These factors will impact on the reliability of the remoteness analysis presented in Chapter 2 and care therefore needs to be taken with how these data are interpreted and used.

8.1.3 Other issues in interpretation

Describing but not explaining observations in the data

Throughout this report we have endeavoured to present data objectively, describing and summarising key observations for readers. With the exception of the conclusion and a small portion of the 25-year trend analysis in Chapter 6, we have tried to avoid offering explanations for phenomena observed in the data. This is because there may be various explanations for these and without thoroughly considering other relevant sources of information and research – something that is beyond the scope of this report – explanations offered may be misleading or incorrect.

Deciding when observed differences are meaningful

There is likely to be random variation in the data collected from year to year in addition to non-randomised variation. In this report, variations of less than 4% over the three year period are not interpreted as meaningful and not specifically referred to. These differences may prove to be meaningful over a longer period of trend analysis, however, and future reports will note these where relevant.

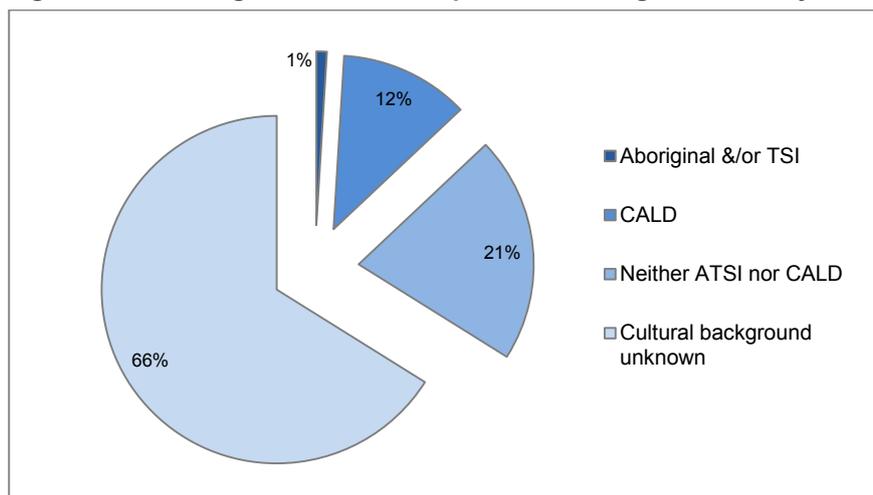
Dealing with missing data

The extent of random variation is likely to increase with the proportion of missing data and to decrease with the size of the subpopulation being analysed. Where substantial proportions of missing data exist, and/or where the subpopulation is very small, this is noted in the text along with caution about interpretation and use of the data.

For example, as shown in Figure 45 below, cultural background information is only available for 34% of counselling contacts in 2015. Accordingly, when changes over time in the concerns of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander contacts are analysed, a substantial amount of the variation observed may be attributable to the incomplete picture we have of this very small subpopulation. There may also be biases associated with missing and known data. For example, we are more likely to know the cultural background of ongoing clients, or clients with more significant mental health concerns.

⁴ For more information on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Remoteness Structure refer to [http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/australian+statistical+geography+standard+\(asgs\)](http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/australian+statistical+geography+standard+(asgs)).

Figure 45. Percentage of 2015 Kids Helpline counselling contacts – by cultural background (N = 70,210)



The impact of repeat contacts

Another issue that needs to be considered when interpreting the data in this report is the issue of repeat contacts. Children and young people are free to contact Kids Helpline as often as they need. Therefore, data reported may include repeat contacts from the same individuals over a period of time. This can result in the data not being reasonably representative of children and young people in a subpopulation, particularly when a subpopulation is very small or where there is a large amount of missing data related to that data collection field – for example, the client’s remoteness classification or cultural background. It may also result in the appearance of trends that are not reflective of genuine changes in the characteristics or needs of the subpopulation. Similarly, it may result in failure to identify trends that really do exist.

The existence of repeat contacts in the population of contacts analysed is another reason why statistical significance tests are avoided as these assume unique randomised sampling of a population.

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[facebook.com/KidsHelpline](https://www.facebook.com/KidsHelpline)

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