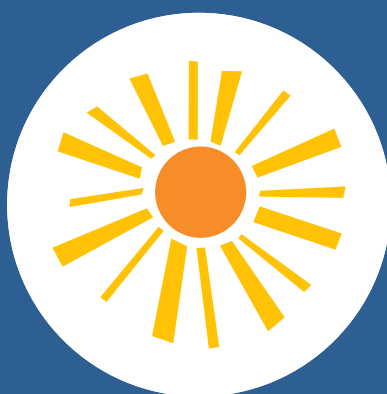



The NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People

Tracking Report 03





We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters and cultures.

We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present.

We would also like to acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal people and culture within the NSW community.

Contents

Advocate's Foreword.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Key findings.....	7
What matters to children and young people.....	11
Overarching Principles.....	13
Main issues children and young people face in NSW.....	15
Hope for the Future.....	16
Hope for the Future in Focus.....	18
Life Skills.....	19
Case Study: Hope for the Future.....	36
Love, Connection and Safety.....	38
Love, Connection and Safety in Focus.....	44
Belonging and Identity.....	44
Case Study: Love, Connection and Safety.....	49
Health and Wellbeing.....	50
A Good Standard of Living.....	54
Environments for Joy and Fun.....	58
Respect and Acceptance.....	62
Level of respect and acceptance experienced.....	62
Advice to the NSW Government.....	66

Advocate's Foreword



Presenting the final tracking report that aligns with the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024 gives ACYP and the NSW government an opportunity to reflect on how children and young people are feeling in NSW today, but also how their situations have improved over the past 3 years.

Children and young people are always generous in sharing their views and insights, and it is the responsibility of those of us who serve them to listen to what they have to say and elevate those voices. It is imperative that we advocate for and implement change to demonstrate our genuine interest and respect for children and young people. ACYP has for the last 3 years sought to lead by example in these matters. Reports have been developed by and from children and young people and delivered to government that respond to concerns children and young people have, including the Cost of Living work and the Vaping Report.

We see an increase in positive sentiment in life as a whole for children and young people in this Report, however study related stress and anxiety continues to be present. This has been a consistent issue that has appeared over the past 3 years and certainly as Advocate I have had a number of conversations and consultations with children and young people that raise this matter with them. There is still work to be done about how we engage with and support children and young people when it comes to study related stress and anxiety.

The positive relationships that children and young people are sharing with adults in their lives is an important finding in this report. That means we need to continue to work to support parents, carers and trusted adults to provide them with tools and supports so that they can help children and young people navigate life in NSW. Together with the peer support responses, we can see that there are a number of ways to invest and support children and young people in NSW that includes investing in their communities around them.

As we commit to work with children and young people, we must continue to listen to them, to ask them what matters to them and to transparently share that information. Decisions we make in positions of influence, need to be informed by what children and young people say they need and where possible we need to ensure they are given the opportunity to inform any decisions. I am forever grateful for the children and young people who engage with our work and who so openly share their views and insights. As always, it is for all of us to continue to serve them by listening to them and then using their voice to inform work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zoe Robinson'.

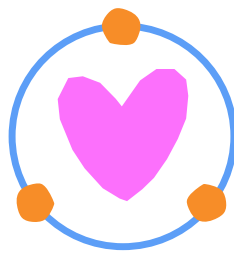
Zöe Robinson
Advocate for Children and Young People

Introduction

The Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP) launched the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024* (Strategic Plan) in April of 2022. ACYP committed to releasing a report each year of the Strategic Plan's lifecycle to monitor, evaluate and track progress under the six core commitment areas. The six core commitment areas of the Strategic Plan are:



Hope for the Future



Love, Connection and Safety



Health and Wellbeing



A Good Standard of Living



Environments for Joy and Fun



Respect and Acceptance

This report is the last in the series of three annual tracking reports for the NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024. This report outlines the key findings from the most recent 2024 survey and compares these with the 2021 benchmark, 2022 and 2023 results, which were included in the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024, Strategic Plan Tracking Report 01* and *Strategic Plan Tracking Report 02*.

We note that throughout this report, where particular cohorts are highlighted as being more likely to report positive or negative scores about a given measure, these are statistically significant results.

ACYP has committed to focus on two of the key commitment areas of the Strategic Plan each year. In 2024 the areas of focus were 'Hope for the Future' and 'Love, Connection and Safety'. As a result, throughout the report you will see additional data deep-dives on these two topics, as well as case studies to demonstrate examples of good practice across NSW.

Methodology

The 2021 benchmark, 2022, 2023 and 2024 tracking surveys involved a 15-minute online survey, with children and young people in NSW aged 10-24 years. Quota targets were set to ensure a good cross-section of the population across demographic sub-groups. Data was weighted to ABS population data for age, gender and location. Further detail about the sample and fieldwork is included below.

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Sample size	n=815	n=1,005	n=1,017	n=1,010
Margin of error at 95% confidence interval	+/-3.4%	+/-3.1%	+/-3.1%	+/-3.1%
Fieldwork period	22 July to 10 August	16 September to 4 October	23 August to 13 September	16 August to 30 August

ACYP commissioned SEC Newgate for this project, which is a member of the Australian Polling Council and The Research Society.

In addition to the tracking study, this report also includes some findings from ACYP's 2024 Youth Week survey. In these instances, the survey source has been identified beneath the relevant chart.

Key Findings

In 2024, the area with the highest positive rating was children and young people's feelings of being able to confide in someone. In 2024, 93% of children and young people felt they could confide in someone. Although positive, extra attention should be made to those who felt they had no one to confide in which were males aged 18-24 (13%), those struggling financially (12%) and those who identify as CALD (11%).

In 2024, the majority of children and young people in NSW are tracking well with most indicators showing a positive outlook amongst children and young people. Although there still remains a number of unresolved concerns for children and young people including the high cost of living and mental health and emotional wellbeing.

The children and young people of NSW said that the high cost of living was the number one issue they faced in 2024, and it has been the number one issue since 2023. The number of children and young people reporting high cost of living as an issue has risen a total of 25% since 2021 (8% in 2021 to 33% in 2024). In 2024, mental health was the second unprompted issue children and young people faced in NSW with 23%, although the number of children and young people stating mental health as an issue has fallen since 2021, it is still a major concern and issue affecting the children and young people of NSW.

■ *Areas indicating improvement*

In 2024, the children and young people of NSW are feeling more positive. Sentiment about life as a whole increased from 72% to 73% in 2024. Sentiment about life these days also increased from 64% to 65% in 2024. Although a majority of children and young people feel positive about life, it is important to note that those who were most likely to feel negative about life were those with a mental illness. Approximately 30% of those with a mental illness rated a negative 0-4/10 when asked about their sentiment about life these days.

In the past 12 months, study related stress and anxiety along with those experiencing a lot or moderate amount of stress dropped from 66% in 2023 to 63% in 2024. Although there was a small drop it is still consistent with the 2021 initial measure of 64%. Those most likely to experience study related stress are those with a mental illness, those who identify as LGBTQIA+, females aged 18-24 and neurodiverse children and young people.

Across NSW, children and young people felt relatively positive about the quality of relationships, particularly with their immediate family (84% rating a 7+/10), the people they lived with (83% rating a 7+/10) and with their friends (81% rating a 7+/10). Although children and young people rated their relationships with others in their community significantly lower compared to other relationships with only 59% rating a 7+/10, those who were more likely to report poor relationships with others in their community were those with a mental illness, those struggling financially, those who identify as LGBTQIA+ and neurodiverse children and young people. Even though a majority of children and young people felt positive about their relationships, certain cohorts were more likely to rate all of their relationships poorly, particularly those with a mental illness, neurodiverse children and young people and those struggling financially.

In 2024, there were significant positive increases in children and young people's overall perception of their physical and mental health. Those rating a positive 7+/10 in relation to their physical health went from 68% in 2023 to 72% in 2024 and those rating a positive 7+/10 in relation to their mental health went from 58% in 2023 to 64% in 2024. Although the majority of children and young people rated their physical and mental health positively, there are certain cohorts who were more likely to rate these areas negatively, such as, those with mental illness, those struggling financially and those with a disability.

This year, ACYP also saw an increase in the number of children and young people who said they were confident to provide peer support, with 77% rating a positive 7+/10, this is higher than the initial measure in 2021 of 72%. There has also been an increase in children and young people's feelings of safety at school with 84% rating a positive 7+/10 up from 80% in 2023.

In 2024, prevalence of discrimination has declined for the second year in a row, with around 1 in 4 (27%) children and young people reporting experiencing discrimination in the past year. However, consistent with previous years, around a quarter of those (23%) who have been discriminated against in the past 12 months experienced it weekly. Although this metric has seen improvements it is still a significant problem impacting children and young people in NSW. Those who were most likely to experience discrimination were those with a physical disability (57%), neurodiverse children and young people (51%), those with a mental illness (44%), Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people (42%). In 2024, ethnicity and cultural background remains the most common reason for discrimination for the second year in a row and it has increased year on year since 2022, with 40% of children and young people who had experienced discrimination in 2024 said it was related to their ethnic/cultural background. Of those 40% who said they experienced discrimination relating to their ethnic/cultural background, 63% were current university students.

■ Areas to monitor

In 2024, the high cost of living was still the number one issue highlighted by children and young people in NSW with 33% mentioning it unprompted. Although there has been a slight decrease in the number of children and young people mentioning the high cost of living as the number one issue it is still a significant concern. Continuing from 2023, 35% of children and young people indicated they have some or a lot of financial difficulty in 2024. Those most likely to indicate financial difficulty were those who have experienced homelessness, those currently in or has been in out-of-home-care, those who have experienced discrimination and those with a mental illness.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing still remains the second issue concerning children and young people in NSW with 23% mentioning it unprompted. It has seen an overall decline of 4% from 2021-2024 with the number of children and young people mentioning mental health as an issue (27% in 2021 – 23% in 2024). Children and young people may see mental health and wellbeing as a second priority due to the impacts of the current high cost of living crisis but nevertheless it is still a significant concern that should not be treated lightly.

In 2024, the number of children and young people saying they were hopeful in their ability to get a job in the field they were interested in dropped from 65% in 2023 to 64% in 2024 (lower than an initial score of 67% in 2021). Those who were more likely to feel less hopeful (rating negative 0-4/10) were those not studying or working, those with a mental illness and those struggling financially.

Bullying has been a major concern over the last four years in NSW and remains a significant issue in 2024 with 35% of children and young people having experienced bullying in the last 12 months and 305 having experienced bullying weekly. Bullying still remains as one of the top 10 unprompted issues facing children and young people in NSW.

Concerningly in 2024 when children and young people were asked about their point in time measure of how anxious they felt, 47% rated a negative 0-4/10 and when they were asked about their sense of resilience, 57% rated a negative 0-4/10. Those most likely to feel more anxious were those with a mental illness and those struggling financially. Those who were most likely to feel they were not resilient were those with a mental illness, those with a disability, those who identified as LGBTQIA+ and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people. This highlights the need for government to focus on the mental health and issues impacting children and young people in NSW.

In 2024, there has also been a significant decline in the number of children and young people who were able to eat a balanced and healthy diet, 81% of children and young people rated a positive 7+/10 down from 85% in 2023. Although the majority of children and young people are able to eat a balanced and healthy diet, those cohorts who were more likely to disagree were recently arrived refugee or migrants, Neurodiverse children and young people and those struggling financially.

Overall, there has been quite a decline in the feelings of safety at work for young people with 78% rating a 7+/10 down from 84% in 2023. Children and young people are also feeling less safe online with 67% rating a positive 7+/10 down from 70% in 2023. Those most likely to feel unsafe at work were recently arrived refugee and migrants, young parents and neurodiverse children and young people, and those most likely to feel unsafe online were neurodiverse children and young people, those with a mental illness and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

■ **Key principles and advice for government**

Each year of the Strategic Plan, ACYP has asked three questions around voice, rights and access to see if children and young people agree or disagree. In 2024, children and young people agree more with government across all metrics. Those who agree that government programs and initiatives that are accessible to them rose to 46% in 2024 up from 42% in 2023. Those who agree that the government considers their rights is at 40% in 2024 up from 32% in 2023. Finally, those who agree that the government listens to people their age is at 25% in 2024 up from 21% in 2023.

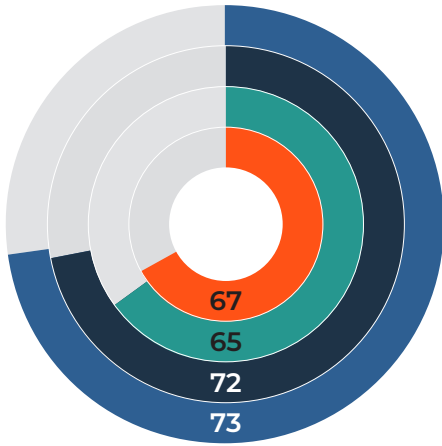
When asked what the NSW Government could do to make life better for children and young people, the most common responses were in relation to:

- having better control on social media and help to reduce reliance on technology
- keeping the community safe online and offline; and
- provide more accessible, available and better support services.

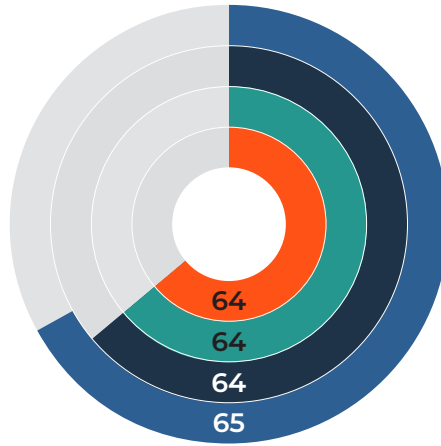
Findings snapshot

% rating 7+/10 ● 2024 ● 2023 ● 2022 ● 2021*

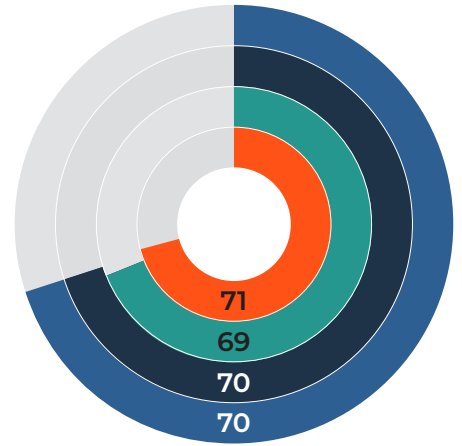
Life as a whole



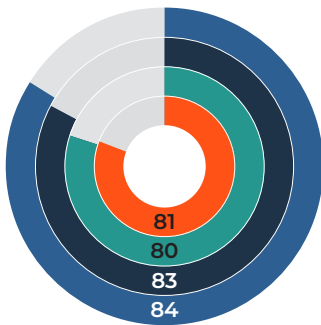
Life these days



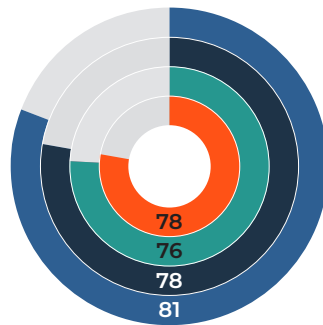
Hope for the future



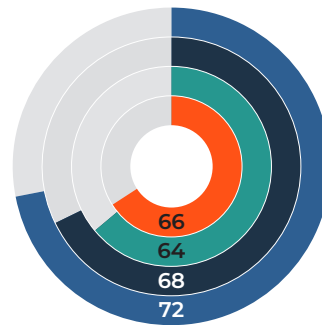
Relationship with family



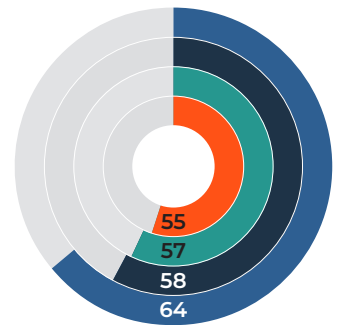
Relationship with friends



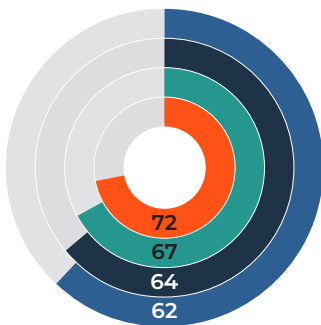
Physical health



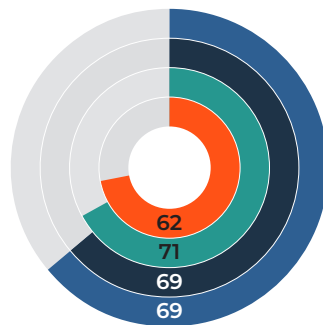
Mental health



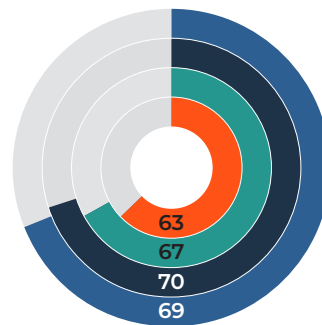
Financially okay or doing well



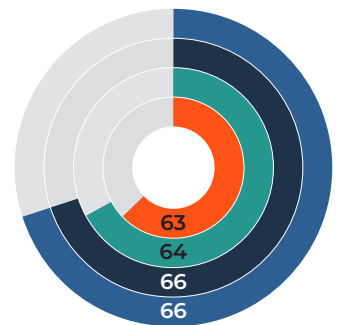
Access to fun activities



Feel safe in public areas around the community



Feel respected in the community



*colour scale corrected as at 17 March 2025.

What matters to children and young people

The **main issues** children and young people said they faced in 2024 were in relation to:

- | | |
|--|---|
|  01. High costs of living |  06. Unemployment and access to jobs |
|  02. Mental health and emotional wellbeing |  07. Social wellbeing and quality of life |
|  03. Education and school |  08. Social media |
|  04. Bullying |  09. Pressure to meet societal expectations and trends |
|  05. Affordability of housing |  10. Screen time addiction |

The **top recommendations** children and young people had for government to make life better for them:

- 1 Have better control on social media and help reduce reliance on technology
- 2 Keep the community safe online and offline
- 3 Provide more accessible resources and better support services
- 4 Provide more education support
- 5 Provide better laws, rules and regulation
- 6 Provide more financial support for those in need
- 7 Create more recreational facilities
- 8 Provide more events, workshops and fun activities for young people
- 9 Make the cost of living more affordable
- 10 Provide mental health support / more access to mental health resources



'Take down illicit content of someone who didn't give permission for it to be posted. More support for victims, introduce new laws for social media and take on the big guys more.'

'Develop more inclusive policies that protect the rights of minorities and ensure that all young people can feel a sense of belonging in society and receive equal treatment.'

'More fun and appropriate things to do when hanging out with mates... more accessible and cheap sporting places (like basketball [courts], driving ranges).'

'Have more resources available for young people in need and make it easy for them to be accessed... make it easy to report bullying and harassment, and make sure the report is followed up.'

'I think young people who have less familial or social presences need more support in general, especially with housing, work, health. I think housing/rent prices are very high, and for a young person, especially one who is studying, it would be very difficult to afford one for themselves, especially if they have no family or friends to lean on.'

'The cost of everything. To buy a car is so expensive. Buying clothes is expensive. I work after school and my wage is low compared to the cost of everything.'

'The cost of living and housing crisis are completely out of hand and give us young people no hope for the future.'

'Too much stress with exams.'

'One issue would be mental health, it's difficult to improve in the current conditions, such as the high cost of living, disconnected communities, a lack of the natural world in everyday life and too much of life spent on technology.'

'Young people spend too much time on social media. They don't have a lot of real life activities.'

'Trying to fit in but wanting to be true to yourself and your values and beliefs at the same time.'

'The cost of living crisis is a crushing weight on a lot of people. We're feeling pigeon holed into only being able to rent, and the thought of buying a house is more like a pipe dream than a reality for majority of people.'



In the voices of children and young people



'Greater assistance with cost of living – affordable options for groceries etc. that encourage younger people to become independent in a healthy way.'

'Provide more support for kids in all schools (not just the rich ones who can afford it), pay and support teachers to stay in the profession...'

'Make it easier to hang out in real life as opposed to social media; that includes better public transport infrastructure and timetables, funding for libraries, parks and other public spaces.'

'I'd like to see a wider range of free activities in the community. This survey asked a lot about community, and I can't say I really have one.'

'Government should focus on expanded mental health services, education aligned with job markets, and enhanced public transport. Prioritise climate action, support marginalized youth, and create platforms for youth voices in policymaking to ensure a brighter, more inclusive future for the younger generation.'

'Provides information, services, and support for young people. Initiatives designed for young people and invite them to participate in their development and implementation.'



Overarching Principles

There are three principles that sit across the Strategic Plan and act as a guide to ensure programs and services meet the needs of children and young people.

01. Voice

Have we listened to children and young people, taken their point of view seriously and given them an opportunity to impact the outcome of decisions made about them?

02. Rights

Are we upholding and promoting children and young people's rights?

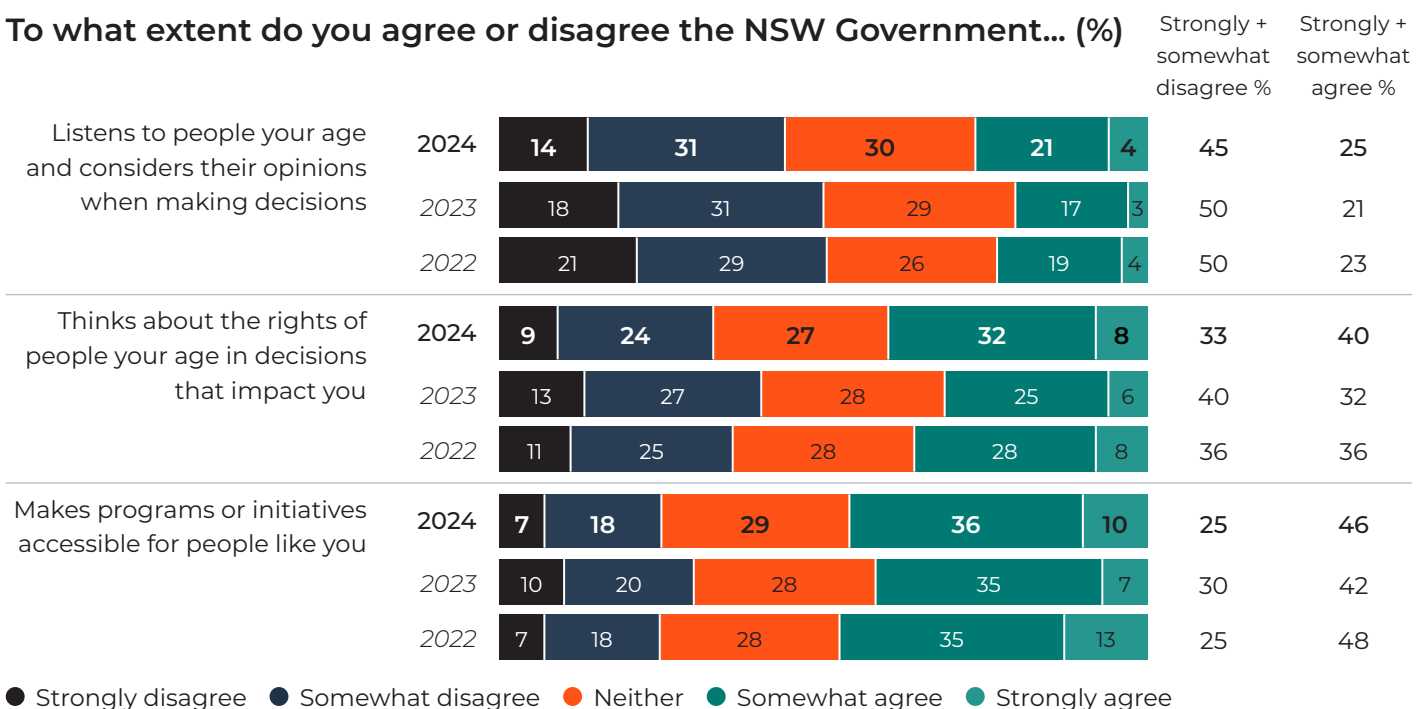
03. Access

Are children and young people able to access this initiative or program?

ACYP's 2024 Youth Week survey asked children and young people to rate the NSW Government on its performance against these three principles.

The NSW Government's performance against all three principles improved across all three metrics in 2024 in comparison to 2023 Youth Week results. While an improvement from 2023, 45% of young people do not feel the NSW Government listens to people and 33% do not feel the NSW Government considers their rights. Children and young people were more positive about their access to programs and initiatives, though 25% still did not feel the NSW Government made programs that were accessible for them. Those who reported facing additional barriers to accessing programs and initiatives were those with a disability (36%).

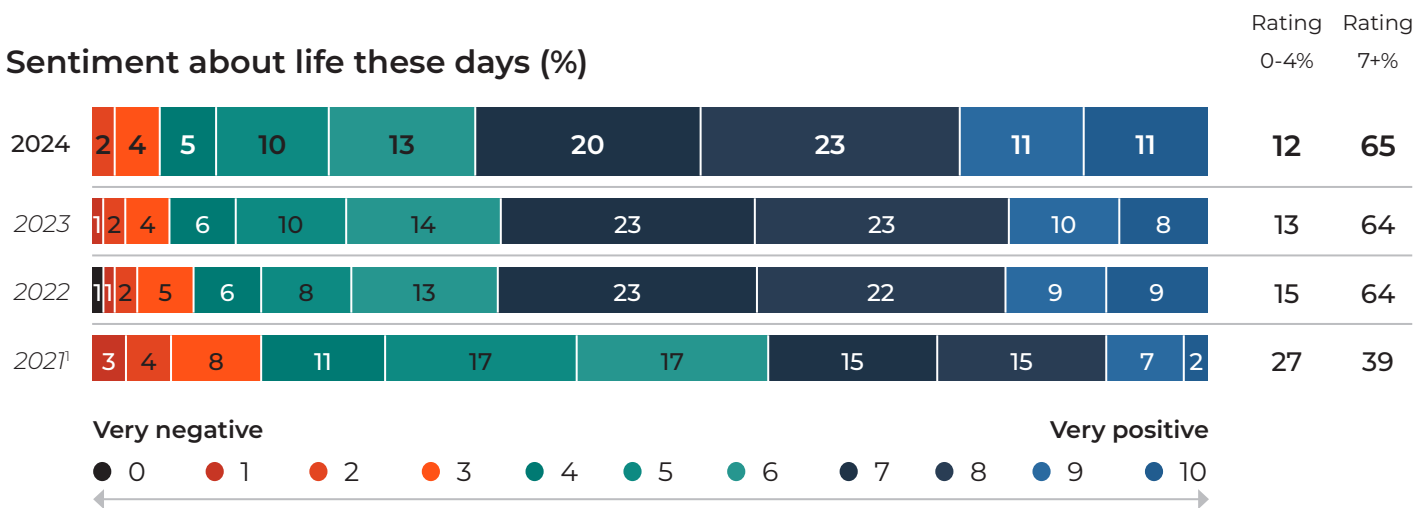
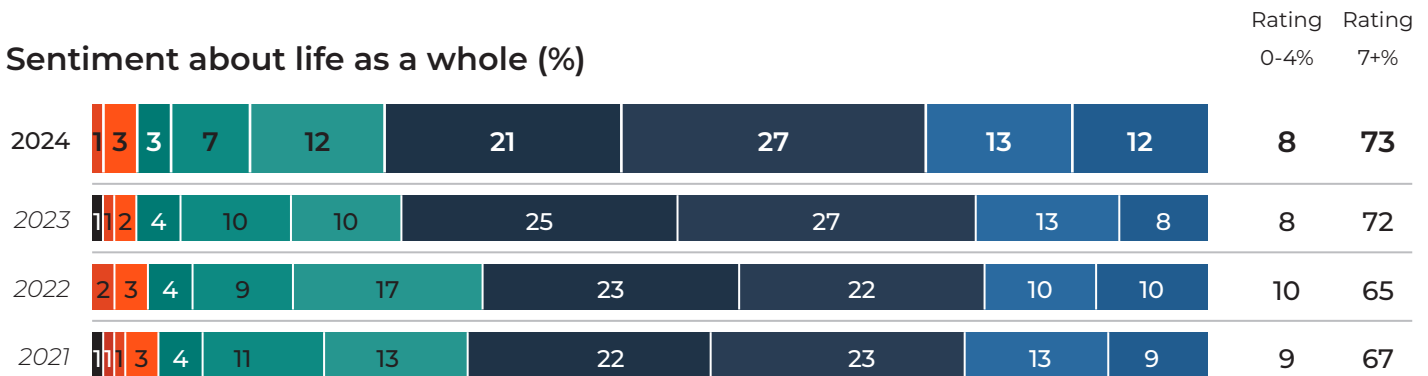
To what extent do you agree or disagree the NSW Government... (%)



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the NSW Government... Base: All participants, 2024 (n=1,102), 2023 (n=1,007), 2022 (n=1,000). Source: Youth Week Polling 2024

Sentiment about life

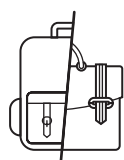
Children and young people were asked to rate their feelings about both life as a whole and life these days and the majority report a relatively positive outlook on both measures. The first question allows us to understand how children and young people are feeling about life generally, taking a longer view, while the second question allows us to understand how they feel their life is going at the point in time of the survey. The positive uplift from 2023 in sentiment about life 'as a whole' has been maintained, with almost three quarters feeling positive and only a small minority feeling negative.



Those more likely to feel negative about life 'these days' in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Those with a mental illness:
30%



Those not working or studying:
26%



Those struggling financially:
26%



TAFE/VET student:
24%



LGBTQIA+ young people:
23%

Q. How do you feel about your life as a whole?

Q. And how do you feel about your life these days? Base: All participants (2024: n=1,010, 2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021

¹ 2021 data was drawn from Wave 2 of the COVID-19 tracking study. Base n=402 young people aged 12-24 years. Fieldwork ran 30 August – 2 September 2021. As these surveys were conducted with slightly different age cohorts, caution should be used in comparing these results.

Main issues children and young people face in NSW

Children and young people were also provided an opportunity, via an open text response, to write about the main issues children and young people face in NSW. The responses were coded, and the top 10 over the past four years are shown below.

Finances, mental health, and education have remained dominant concerns for children and young people across NSW in the last four years. While mental health had been the primary concern in 2021 and 2022, cost of living became the predominant issue in 2023, with a third of children and young people mentioning this unprompted and more mentioning related issues such as the affordability of housing. Concerns about social media persist and screentime addiction has also become a top 10 issue for the children and young people of NSW.

	Top 10 Issues 2024	Top 10 Issues 2023	Top 10 Issues 2022	Top 10 Issues 2021
1.	33% – Financial instability and high cost of living	35% – Financial instability and high cost of living	32% – Mental health and emotional wellbeing (anxiety, stress, depression, etc.)	27% – Mental health and emotional wellbeing (anxiety, stress, depression, etc.)
2.	23% – Mental health and emotional wellbeing (anxiety, stress, depression, etc.)	22% – Mental health and emotional wellbeing (anxiety, stress, depression, etc.)	26% – Financial instability and high cost of living	24% – COVID-19
3.	15% – Education, school or home-schooling	18% – Education, school or home-schooling	15% – Pressure to meet societal expectations or trends	17% – Education, school, or home-schooling
4.	14% – Bullying	16% – Affordability of housing	14% – Social wellbeing or quality of life	17% – Being in lockdown restrictions/isolation
5.	13% – Affordability of housing	13% – Unemployment and access to jobs	13% – Affordability of housing	16% – Unemployment and access to jobs
6.	13% – Unemployment and access to jobs	12% – Bullying	13% – Education, school or home-schooling	10% – Affordability of housing
7.	10% – Social wellbeing or quality of life	11% – Social wellbeing or quality of life	12% – Bullying	10% – Social media
8.	8% – Social media	10% – Pressure to meet societal expectations or trends	11% – Social media	9% – Social wellbeing or quality of life
9.	7% – Pressure to meet societal expectations or trends	9% – Social media	10% – Unemployment and access to jobs	6% – Bullying
10.	7% – Screentime addiction	9% – Fear, stress or uncertainty for the future	7% – Drug and alcohol abuse	5% – Drug and alcohol abuse

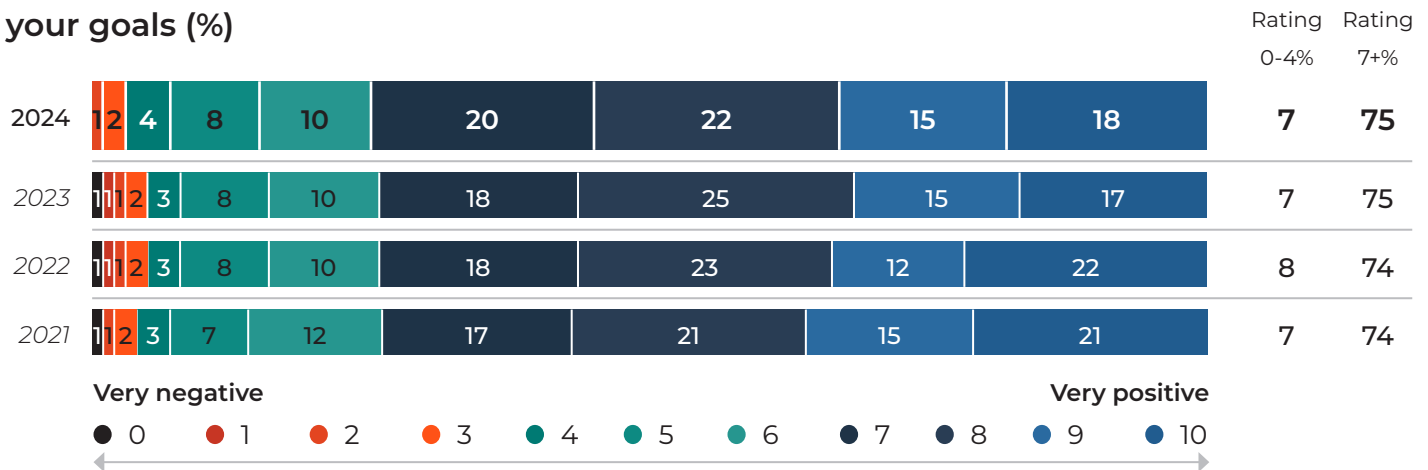


01. Hope for the Future

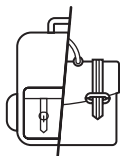
Children and young people's individual learning and interests are fostered through education, training and skills development which supports them to grow and prepares them for their future. They are supported to be independent, engage in society and to join the workforce.

In 2024, the majority of children and young people remain optimistic about their ability to get the education and training they need, and about their future in general. However, fewer are hopeful about their ability to find a job in a field they are interested in, a trend that remains unchanged from previous years. Although the majority of children and young people feel hopeful, there are some groups of children and young people who were less likely to feel hopeful across all three metrics: those not working or studying; neurodiverse children and young people; those with a mental illness; and those struggling financially.

Hope in your ability to get the education and training you need to achieve your goals (%)



Those less likely to feel hopeful in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Those not working or studying:
30%



Neurodiverse children and young people:
20%



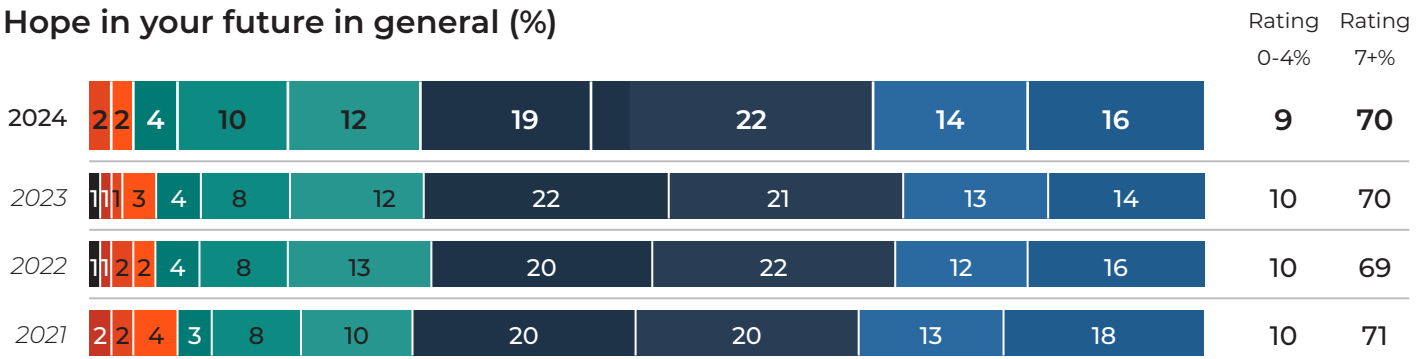
Those with mental illness:
16%



Those struggling financially:
14%



Hope in your future in general (%)



Those less likely to feel hopeful in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Those struggling financially:
21%



Those with a mental illness:
17%

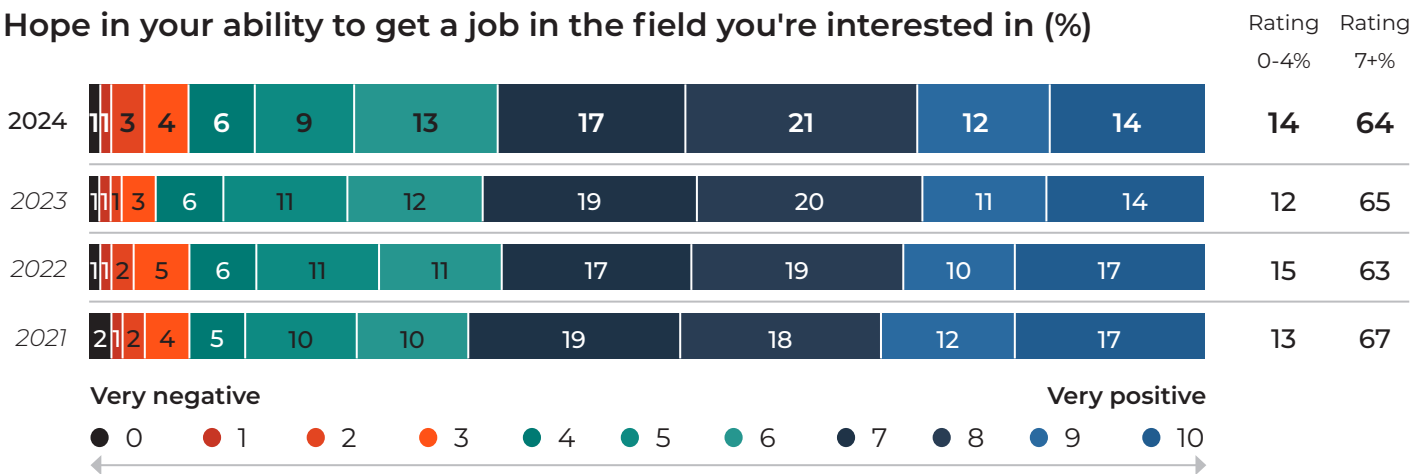


Casually employed:
17%

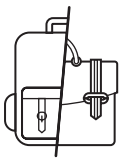


Females aged 18-24:
15%

Hope in your ability to get a job in the field you're interested in (%)



Those less likely to feel hopeful in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Those not working or studying:
34%



Those with a mental illness:
32%



Those struggling financially:
31%



LGBTQIA+ young people:
28%



Neurodiverse children and young people:
27%



Females aged 18-24:
23%

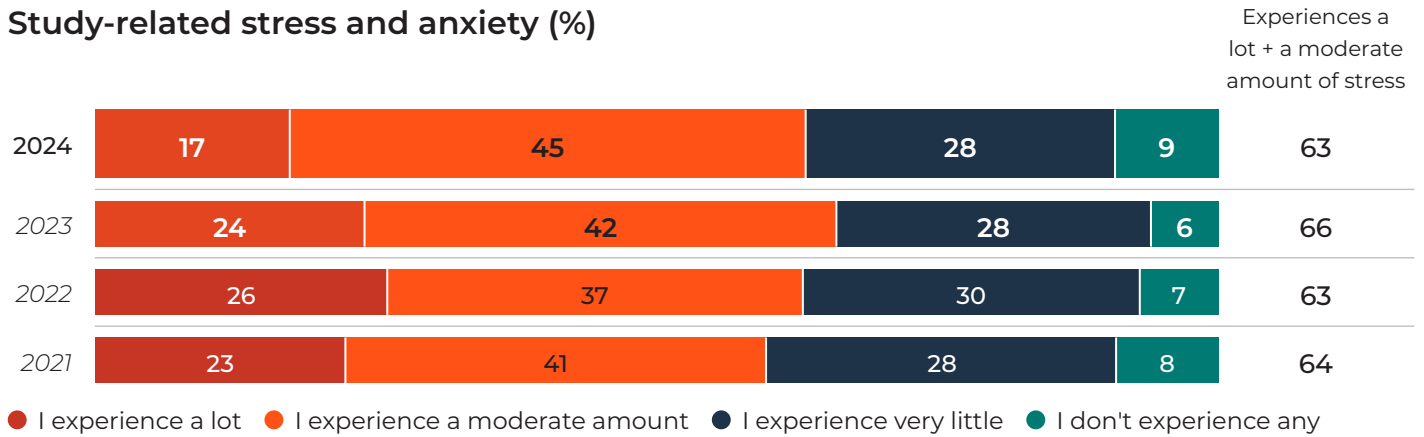
Q. Now a couple of questions about your hopes and expectations for the future. How hopeful do you feel about...?
Base: All participants (2024: n=1,010, 2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)



Study-related stress and anxiety

In line with previous findings, around two in three young people in education report experiencing study-related stress or anxiety. Concerningly, there are some groups of children and young people who are experiencing extremely high rates of study related stress. Those with a mental illness, those who identify as LGBTQIA+, females aged 18-24, neurodivergent children and young people, and those with a disability are more vulnerable to study-related stress.

Study-related stress and anxiety (%)



Those more likely to feel a lot or a moderate amount of study-related stress or anxiety in 2024



Those with a mental illness:

91%



LGBTQIA+ young people:

91%



Females aged 18-24:

87%



Neurodiverse children and young people:

86%



Those with a disability:

85%



Those struggling financially:

81%

Hope for the Future in Focus

As part of its own commitments under the final year of the Strategic Plan, ACYP has focused on 'Hope for the Future' and 'Love, Connection and Safety' as areas to explore in more detail in 2024. As a result, the questions below were added to the 2024 Youth Week survey to explore the experiences of children and young people when it comes to the topics they have highlighted to ACYP as being important to them; the skills they want to learn about for daily life and career paths.

Q. To what extent do you experience stress or anxiety related to school/your studies?
Base: All students (2024: n=782, 2023: n=769, 2022: n=517, 2021: n=637)

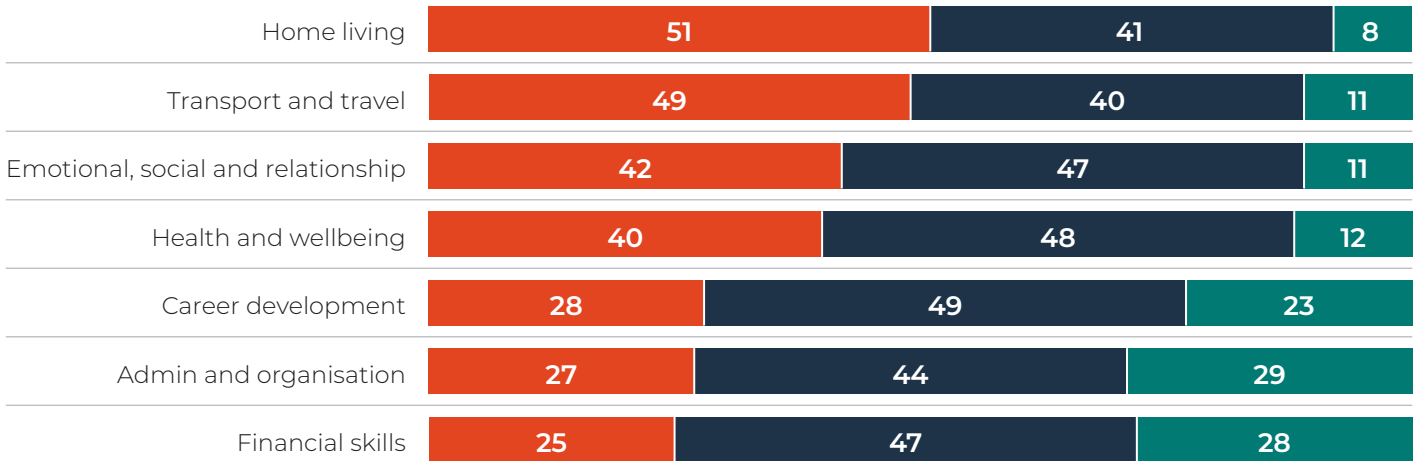


Life Skills

Access to life skills learning and support

Children and young people would like greater access to learning and support opportunities across all seven life skills domains presented to them. The most critical needs relate to financial skills, administration and organisation, and career development.

Perceptions of access to learning and support for life skills (%)

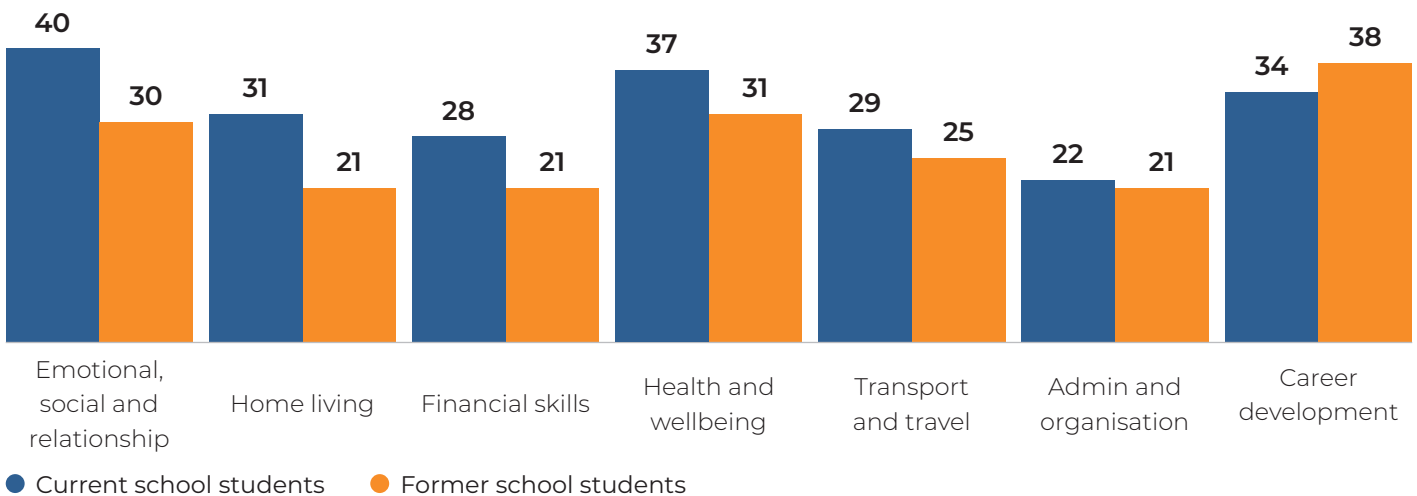


- Yes, I have enough information about this
- I have some information, but would like more
- No, I don't have enough information

Adequacy of access to information on life skills from school

Encouragingly, current school students appear to have better access to information on life skills than their predecessors, particularly when learning about emotional, social and relationships skills and home living skills. This is consistent for all areas except career development.

Rating of access to information from your school (% rating 7+/10)



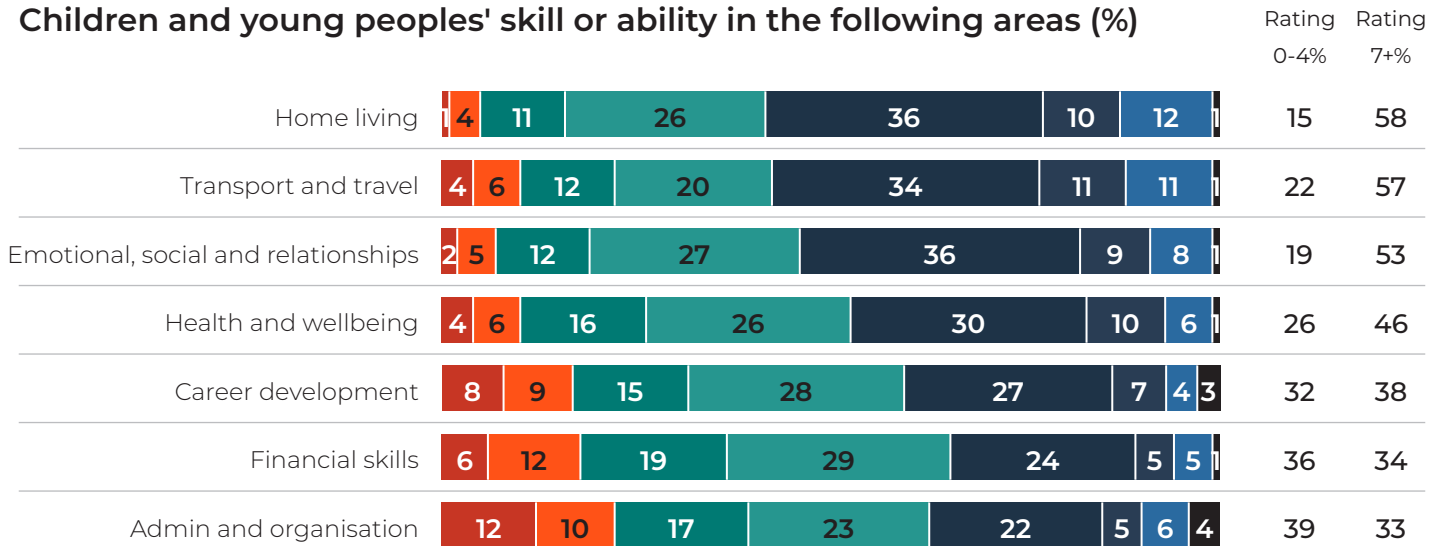
Q. Do you feel you have sufficient access to learning and support to be able to develop the following skills?
 C4. What challenges do you face in accessing learning and support to develop these skills? Base: All participants, 2024 (n=1,102)
 Q. How sufficient is the information you receive from your school about each of the following topics? Base: School students (n=517)
 Q. How sufficient was the information you received from your school about each of the following topics? Base: Non-school students (n=585)



Current rating of own skills and abilities

Children and young people recognise they need further learning and support across all life skill domains. Around 2 in 5 rated their own competence poorly when it came to their administrative and organisational skills and financial skills. Just over half of participants feel they are competent in skills relating to the home, transport and travel and emotional and relationships skills.

Children and young peoples' skill or ability in the following areas (%)



● 0 (Not competent at all) ● 1-2 ● 3-4 ● 5-6 ● 7-8 ● 9 ● 10 (Very competent) ● Don't know

Preferred sources of information to building abilities

Parents are the number one source of information for all skills, with friends, school and search engines being other common ways of finding out information on building skills. Government websites or apps are not prominently featured as a source of information, indicating that if government wants to improve children and young people's access to this information, it needs to provide information to young people where they are seeking it.

	Career development	Emotional, social and relationship	Health and wellbeing	Transport and travel	Home living	Financial	Admin and organisation
#1	Parent(s) – 57%	Parent(s) – 60%	Parent(s) – 62%	Parent(s) – 60%	Parent(s) – 74%	Parent(s) – 67%	Parent(s) – 60%
#2	School / Uni / TAFE / College / Online courses – 54%	Friend(s) – 59%	Friend(s) – 41%	Typing questions into Google – 41%	Friend(s) – 38%	Typing questions into Google – 38%	School / Uni / TAFE / College / Online courses – 38%
#3	Typing questions into Google – 40%	Other family (e.g. siblings, extended) – 31%	Typing questions into Google – 37%	Friend(s) – 40%	Other family (e.g. siblings, extended) – 34%	School / Uni / TAFE / College / Online courses – 35%	Typing questions into Google – 37%
#4	Friend(s) – 31%	Social media – 30%	Social media – 33%	Government websites or apps – 28%	Typing questions into Google – 32%	Friend(s) – 30%	Friend(s) – 28%
#5	Social media – 26%	Typing questions into Google – 24%	School / Uni / TAFE / College / Online courses – 28%	Other family (e.g. siblings, extended) – 25%	Social media – 31%	Other family (e.g. siblings, extended) – 26%	Social media – 24%

Q. How would you rate your skill level or ability in each of the following areas? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)
 Q. Where would you go for information, advice and resources to help you build your abilities in each of these areas?
 Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Importance of building different skills

The majority of children and young people recognise the importance of building each of these life skills, especially home living and emotional, social and relationship skills, health and wellbeing and financial skills.

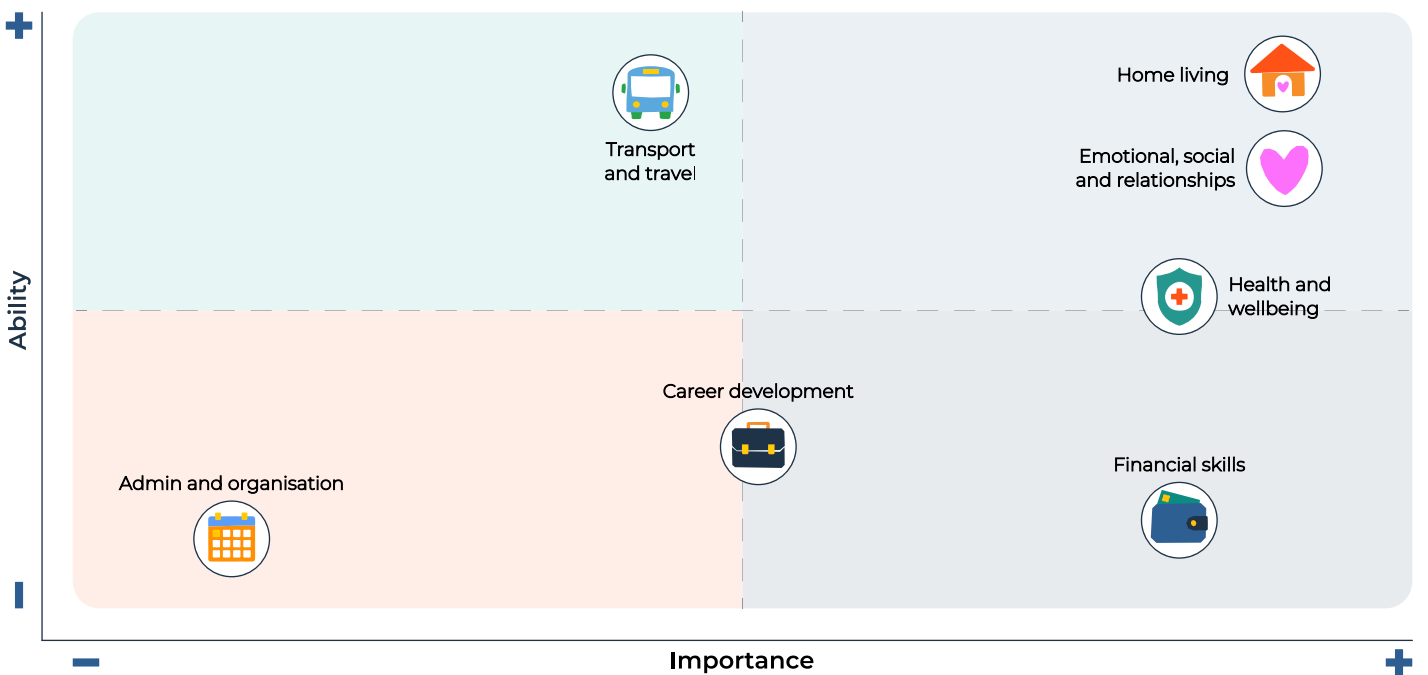
Perceived importance of skills or abilities in the following areas (%)

						Rating 0-4%	Rating 7+%		
Home living	1	5	15	34	17	28	7	78	
Emotional, social and relationships	1	6	14	31	16	31	7	78	
Health and wellbeing	1	6	14	31	15	31	8	77	
Financial skills	2	2	8	12	29	14	33	11	77
Career development	2	2	7	16	32	16	25	11	73
Transport and travel	1	1	5	21	37	13	22	7	72
Admin and organisation	3	2	7	19	34	13	21	13	68

● 0 (Not competent at all) ● 1-2 ● 3-4 ● 5-6 ● 7-8 ● 9 ● 10 (Very competent) ● Don't know

Life skills domain: Importance and Ability

When comparing how important a skill is and how little information children and young people feel they have, financial skills and careers are indicated as priority areas for development. Young people feel their capabilities with skills related to admin and organisation, and career development are relatively low – but do not currently see these as being highly important



Q. How important do you feel it is for people your age to build their skills in these areas in these areas? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)

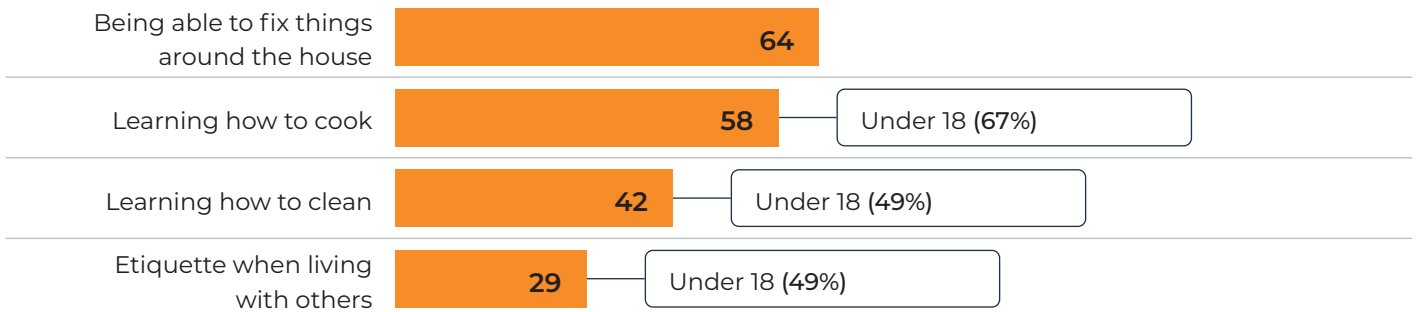


Each of these domains will be explored in greater detail below. While it is not surprising that children and young people aged under 18, were less likely to feel competent in their skill across each domain, it is notable that those in Regional NSW were also more likely to feel ill-equipped in six of the seven areas, with only financial skills showing no significant difference from their metropolitan peers.

Importance and ability with home living skills

Children and young people feel most competent in their abilities in home living skills, it rated equal-first as an important skill to build, alongside emotional, social and relationship skills. Fixing things around the house and learning how to cook were identified as being the most helpful skills to build.

Most helpful to build your abilities in home living skills (%)



78% feel this skill is important, while only 58% report they are competent

Who is more likely to feel they are not competent?



Males under 18:

25%



Aged under 18:

22%



Regional NSW resident:

21%

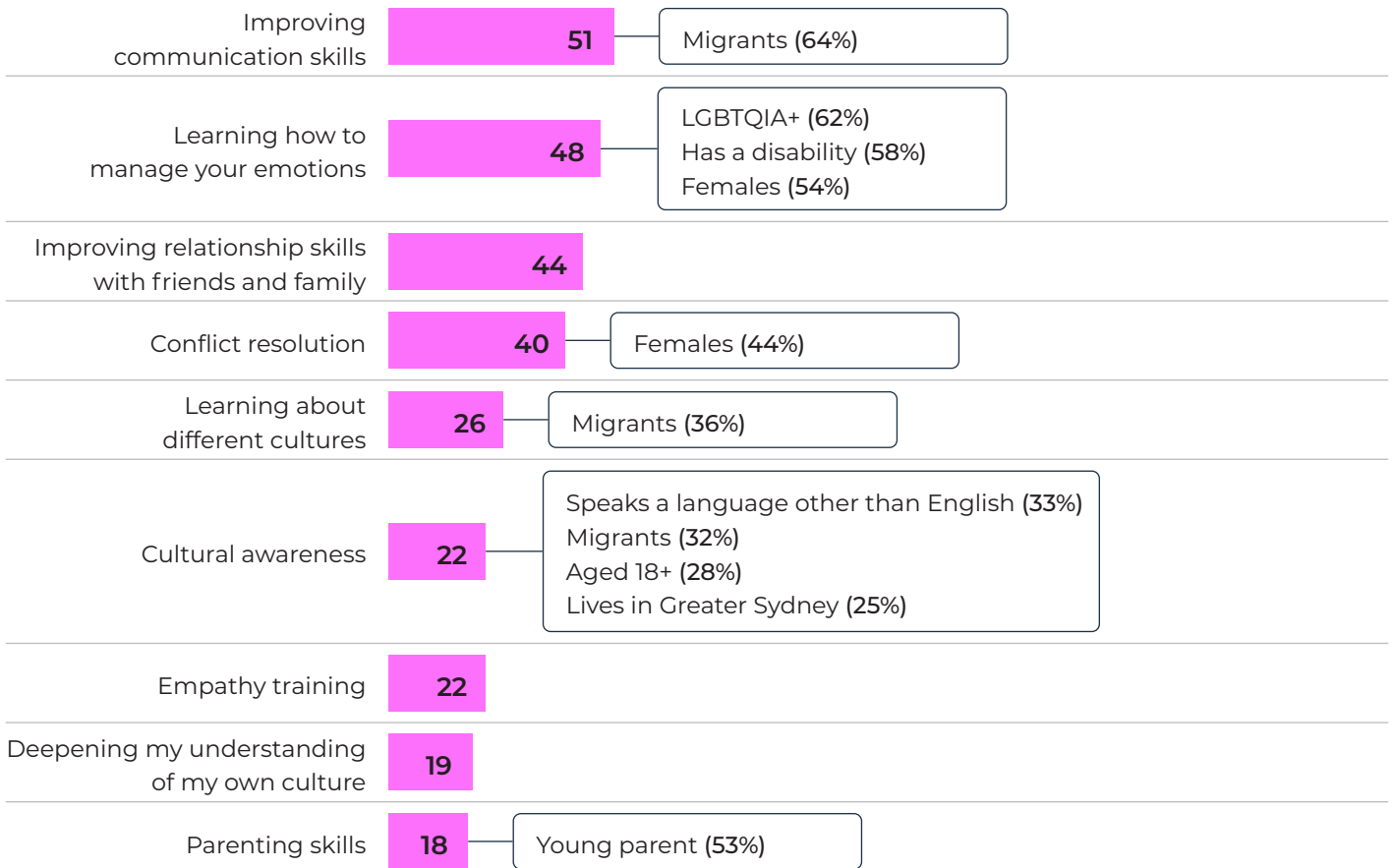
Q. How important do you feel it is for people your age to build their skills in these areas in these areas? Q. How would you rate your skill level or ability in each of the following areas? Q. Which of the following home living skills would you find most helpful to build your ability in?
Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Importance of building emotional, social and relationship skills

Building emotional skills is considered the other most important skill to build, but only 53% of children and young people feel competent. Around 8 in 10 feel that building emotional, social and relationship skills is important, while just over half report feeling competent in this area. Improving communication skills, learning how to manage emotions, and improving relationship skills with friends and family are rated as most important to learn.

Most helpful emotional, social and relationship skills (%)



78% feel this skill is important, while only 53% report they are competent

Who is more likely to feel they are not competent?



Those with a disability:

30%



Regional NSW resident:

27%



Aged under 18:

21%

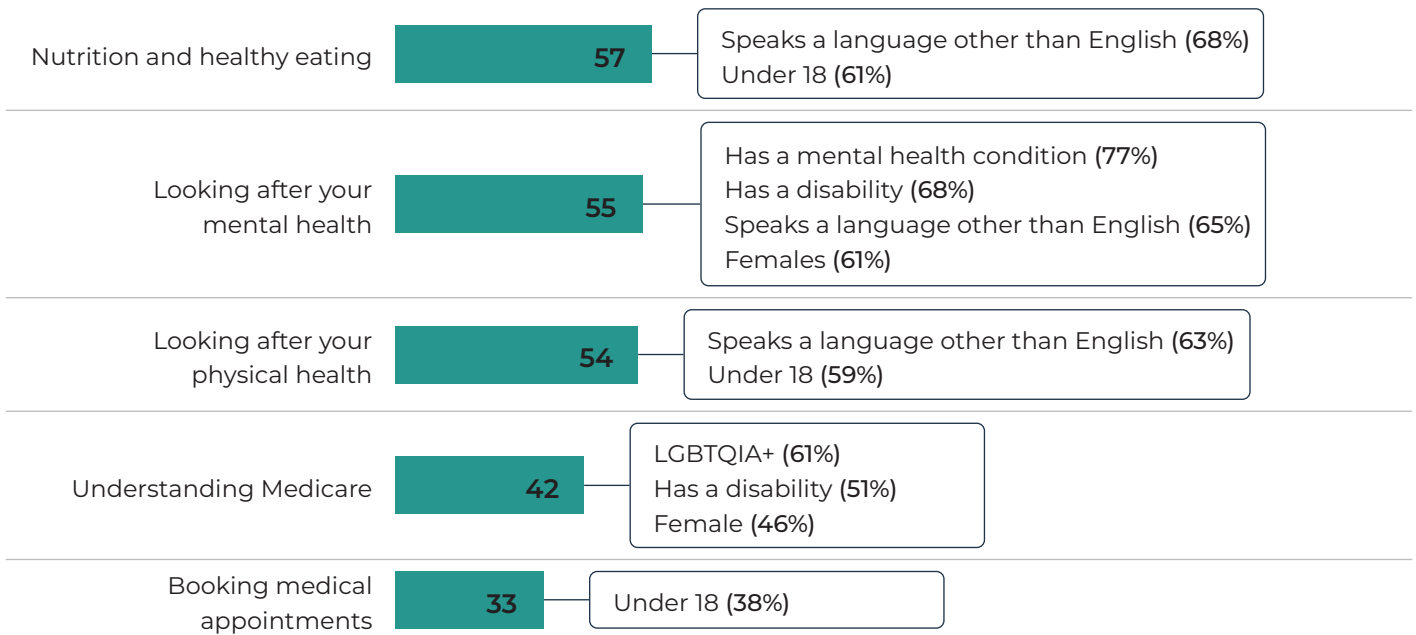
Q. How important do you feel it is for people your age to build their skills in these areas in these areas? Q. How would you rate your skill level or ability in each of the following areas? Q. Which of the following emotional, social and relationship skills would you most like to build your ability in? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Importance of building health and wellbeing skills

A majority feel health and wellbeing skills are important to build with fewer than half reporting themselves as competent. Learning about nutrition and mental and physical health were seen a greater priority than understanding Medicare and booking medical appointments.

Most helpful to build your abilities in health and wellbeing skills (%)



77% feel this skill is important, while only 46% report they are competent

Who is more likely to feel they are not competent?



Males under 18:

40%



Aged under 18:

37%



Regional NSW resident:

35%

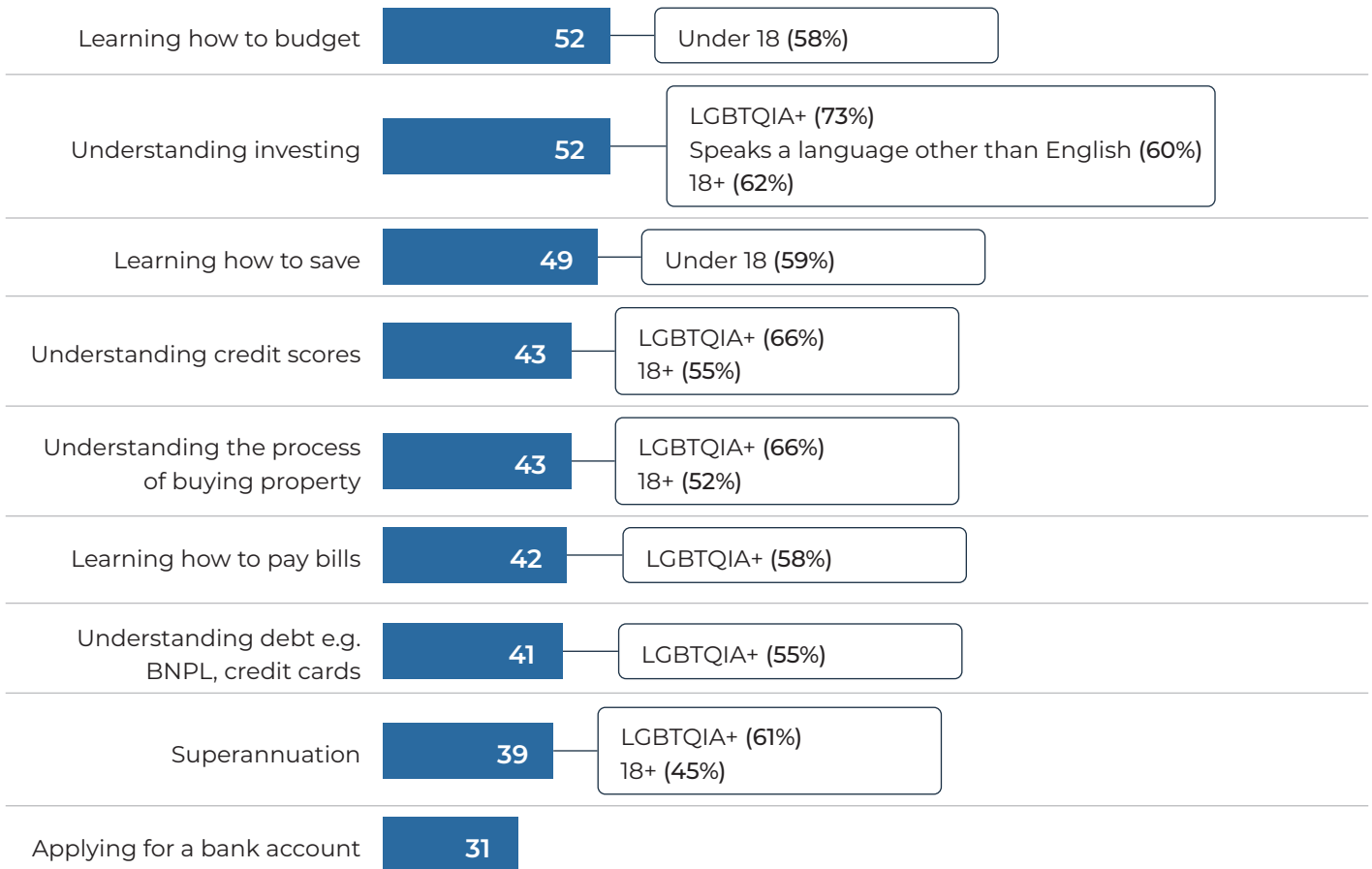
Q. How important do you feel it is for people your age to build their skills in these areas in these areas? Q. How would you rate your skill level or ability in each of the following areas? Q. Which of the following health and wellbeing skills would you find most helpful to build your ability in?
Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Importance of building financial skills

Despite financial skills being considered one of the most important skills to build, only a third reported feeling competent in this domain. Learning to budget, invest and save were the top three skills children and young people felt would be most helpful to learn.

Most helpful to build your abilities in financial skills (%)



77% feel this skill is important, while only 34% report they are competent

Who is more likely to feel they are not competent?



Has a mental health condition:

45%



Born in Australia:

38%



Aged under 18:

45%

Note: Females were significantly more likely to feel many of the financial skills would be helpful for them to build.

Q. How important do you feel it is for people your age to build their skills in these areas? Q. How would you rate your skill level or ability in each of the following areas? Q. Which of the following financial skills would you find most helpful to build your ability in? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)

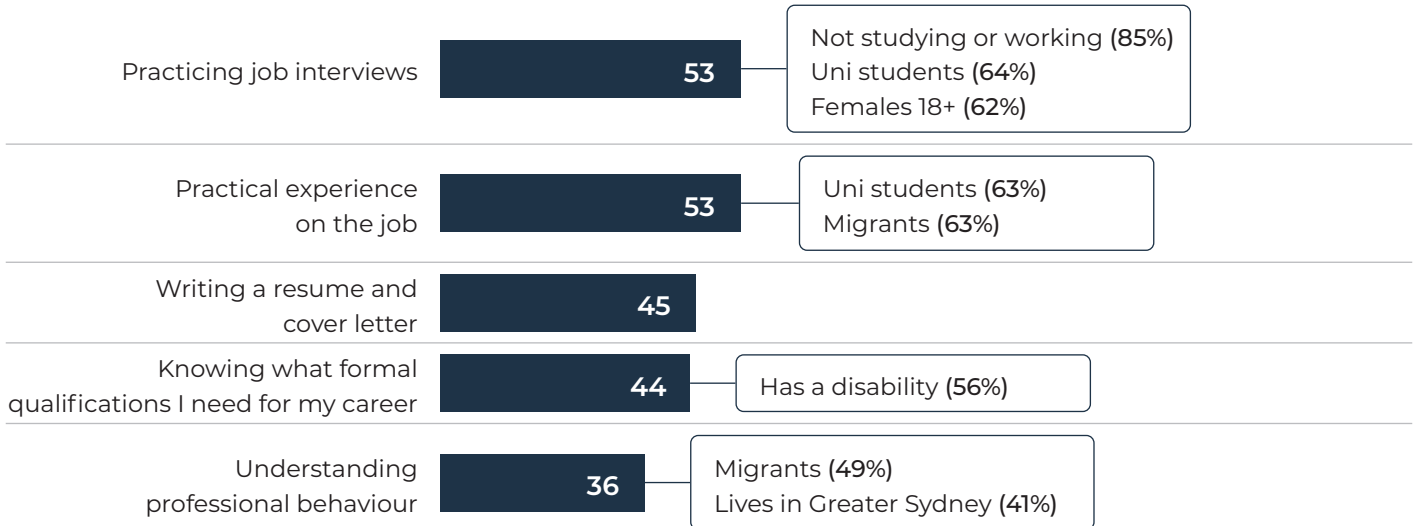


Importance of building career development skills

Survey results identified a gap in competence related in career development skills. Up to three in four children and young people feel that this skill is important, however a minority (38%) report feeling competent in this area. Fifty-three percent of children and young people are most eager to practice job interviews and an equal 53% want to get practical experience on the job.

Those not currently working or studying were more likely to prioritise the need to practice interview skills.

Most helpful to build your abilities in career development skills (%)



73% feel this skill is important, while only 38% report they are competent

Who is more likely to feel they are not competent?



Males under 18:
44%



Regional NSW resident:
44%



Have a disability:
40%



Dependent:
36%

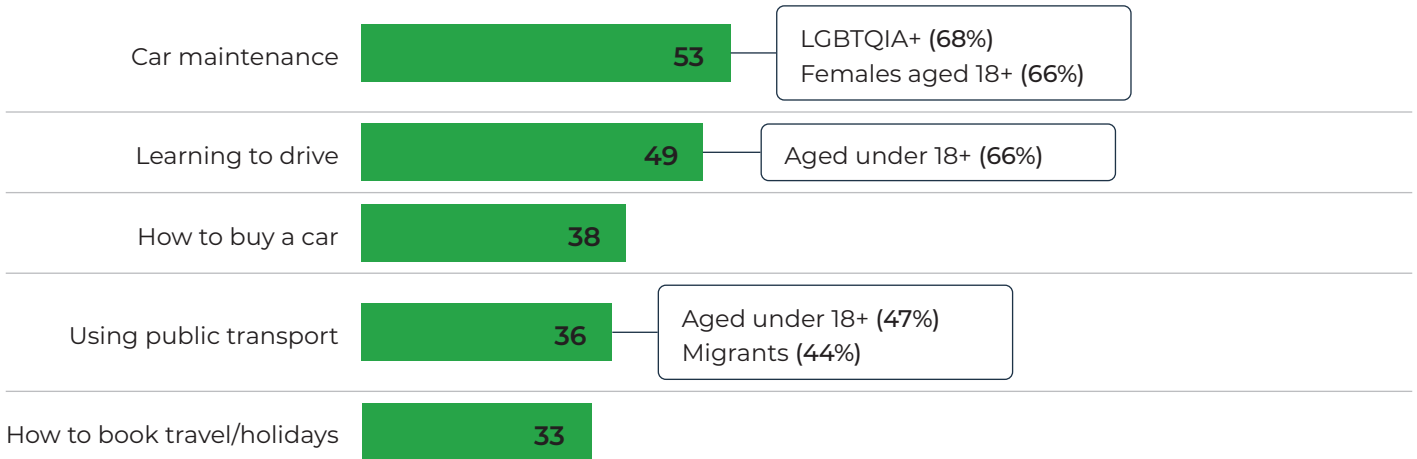
Q. How important do you feel it is for people your age to build their skills in these areas? Q. How would you rate your skill level or ability in each of the following areas? Q. Which of the following career development skills would you most like to build your ability in?
Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Importance of building transport and travel skills

While transport and travel skills were not considered by survey participants, to be as important as other skills, more than half of children and young people reported having relatively high levels of competence. Around half felt it would be helpful to learn how to maintain a car and learn to drive. Females aged 18-24 and those who live dependently were especially likely to feel transport skills were important.

Most helpful to build your abilities in transport and travel skills (%)



72% feel this skill is important, while only 57% report they are competent

Who is more likely to feel they are not competent?



Regional NSW resident:
34%



Aged under 18:
32%

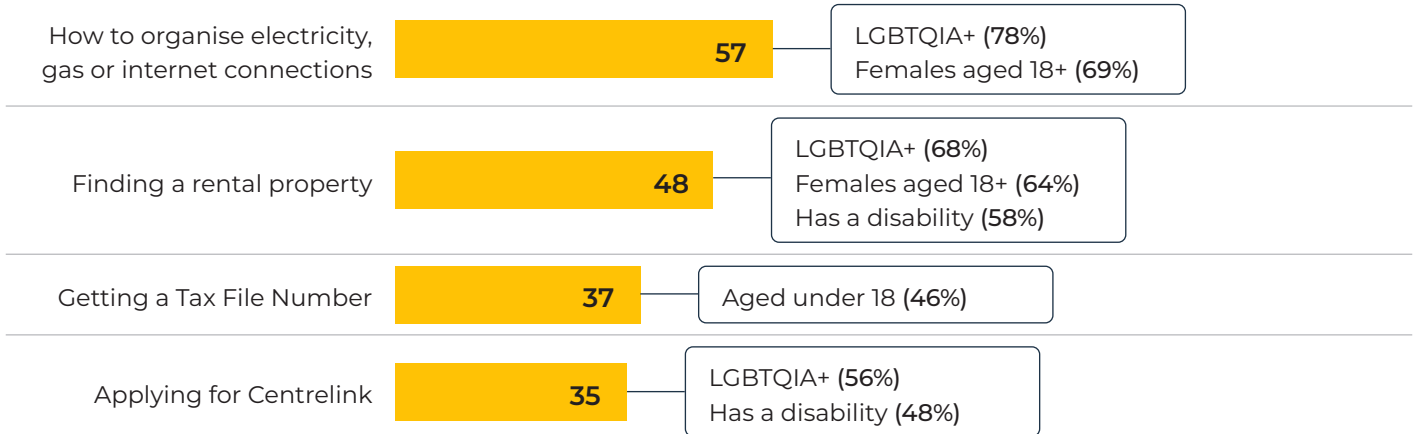
Q. How important do you feel it is for people your age to build their skills in these areas in these areas? Q. How would you rate your skill level or ability in each of the following areas? // Q. Which of the following transport and travel skills would you find most helpful to build your ability in? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Importance of building admin and organisation skills

While only a minority of children and young people feel they are competent at administration and organisational skills, this skill was also considered to be the least important skill to build. However, organising utilities connections and finding rental properties were seen to be most useful to learn, particularly for LGBTQIA+ young people. For more information, see ACYP's [The Voices of LGBTQIA+ Young People in NSW](#) report.

Most helpful to build your abilities in admin and organisation skills (%)



68% feel this skill is important, while only 33% report they are competent

Who is more likely to feel they are not competent?



Females under 18: 56%



Aged under 18: 54%



Regional NSW resident: 50%

Q. How important do you feel it is for people your age to build their skills in these areas in these areas? Q. How would you rate your skill level or ability in each of the following areas? // Q. Which of the following admin and organisation skills would you find most helpful to build your ability in? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



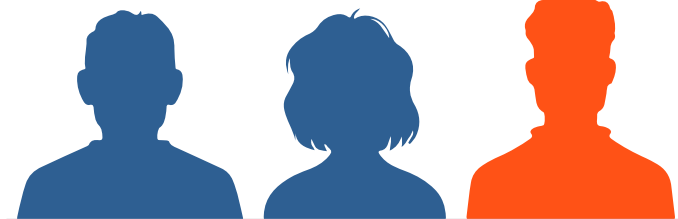
Career paths

Views on career direction

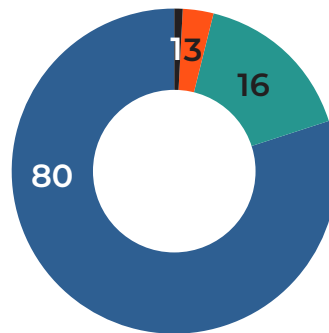
Most children and young people (65%) have an idea of the career they want to pursue. However, for those currently in the workforce, only a third (32%) see a long-term career in their current job.

2 in 3 (65%)

have some idea of the job or career they want to pursue.



Levels of certainty around their chosen career path (% among those who have an idea of what job they want)



Those more likely to be certain (% 7+/10):

Speaks a language other than English (**87%**)
Males (**83%**)

1 in 3 (32%)

of young people in the workforce see a long-term career in their current job.

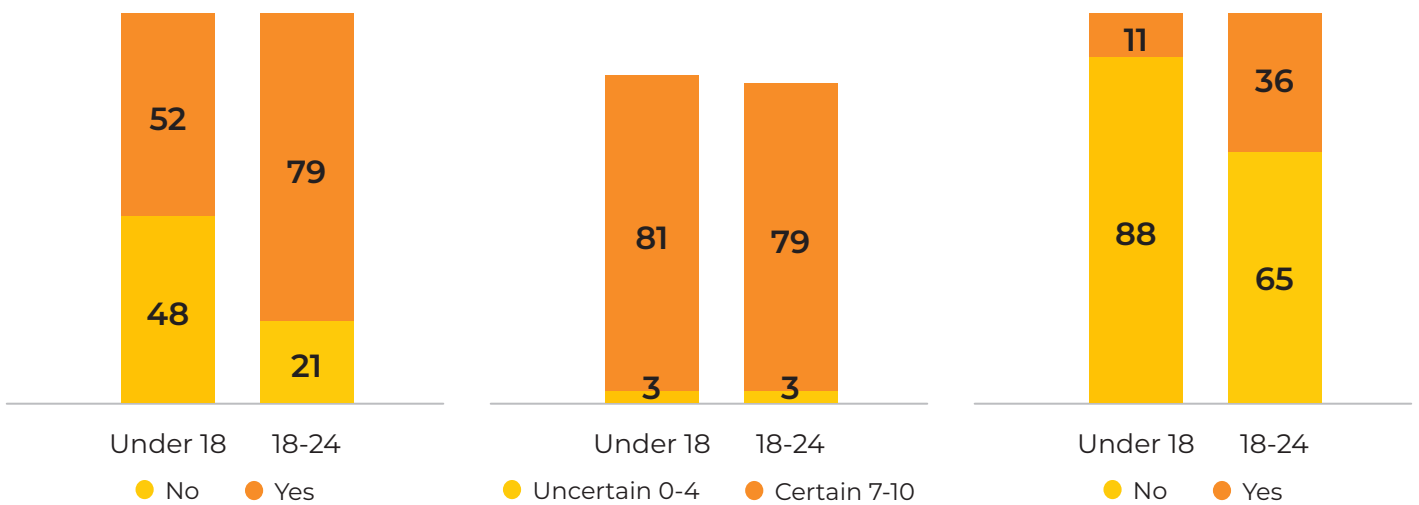
● (Uncertain) 0-4 ● 5-6 ● 7-10 (Certain)
● Don't know

79

Do you have an idea of what job, career or industry you want to pursue?(%)

How certain are you that you want that job? (%)

Do you see a long-term career in your current job? (%)



Q. Do you have an idea of what job, career or industry you want to work in? Base: All participants, 2024 (n=1,102)

Q. How certain are you that you want to do that job? Participants who said they knew what career they wanted to pursue. (n=734)

Q. Thinking about your current job, do you see a long-term career in your current job or industry? Base: participants who have a job, 2024 (n=414)

2 We note in this question young people currently in the workforce were given three options of why they didn't see a long-term career in their current job. These being; "no, I am actively trying to change my job", "no, I intend to find a new job at some point", "no, I am doing this job temporarily while I finish my studies".



Reasons behind chosen careers: *The Voices of Children and Young People*

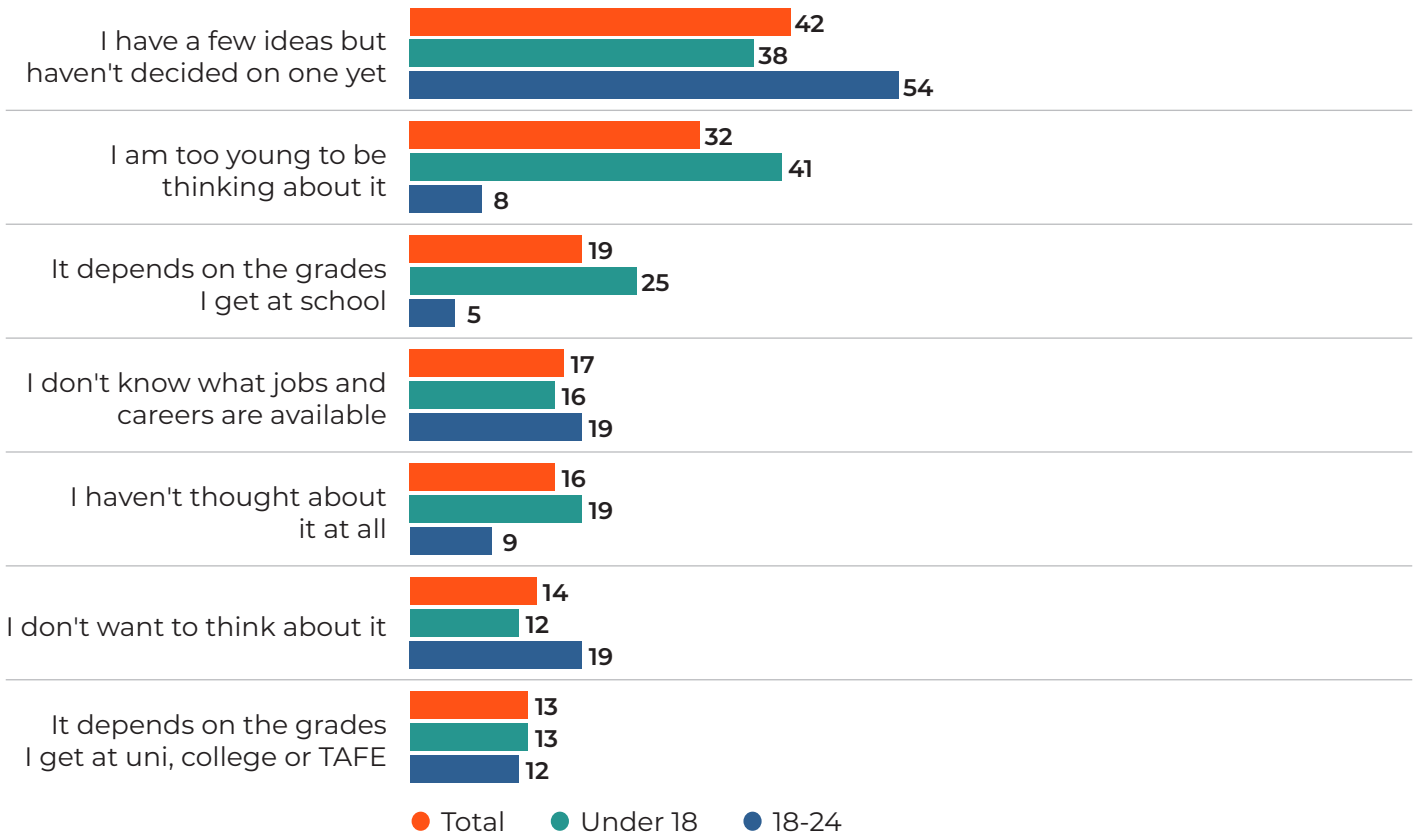
<p>Quantum Physicist Male, 16</p> <p><i>"I love learning about and teaching the scientific nature of the universe."</i></p> <hr/> <p>Primary Teacher Female, 23</p> <p><i>"To make a positive impact on younger children's learning and support them in their learning needs."</i></p> <hr/> <p>Midwife Female, 11</p> <p><i>"I want to help people have children."</i></p> <hr/> <p>Engineer Female, 15</p> <p><i>"My father is an Engineer, and I would like to follow his footsteps."</i></p>	<p>Foreign Aid / Human Rights Worker Female, 17</p> <p><i>"I want to learn about different places around the world, I don't want to be restricted to one place, I want to help people."</i></p> <hr/> <p>Architect Female, 21</p> <p><i>"How to help fix the rental crisis and create homes for individuals who may not have had them before."</i></p> <hr/> <p>Tradesman Male, 12</p> <p><i>"Good money and I can still stay near home and play football."</i></p>	<p>Mechanical Engineer Male, 19</p> <p><i>"It pays well and is engaging, challenging and offers careers working with cars and motorsports."</i></p> <hr/> <p>Child Psychologist Female, 23</p> <p><i>"There isn't enough help for young children and isn't enough awareness in teaching children the foundations of their own mental health and emotional regulation. I also want to help children of domestic/sexual violence as it would be better to have the resources to intervene."</i></p>	<p>Clinical Researcher Female, 18</p> <p><i>"Because I want to do research to help people and solve problems in mental health."</i></p> <hr/> <p>Hairdresser Female, 23</p> <p><i>"I love getting creative in my industry and working with people to make them feel the best version of themselves."</i></p> <hr/> <p>Pilot Male, 13</p> <p><i>"I like planes and want to fly them."</i></p>
--	--	---	---

Q. What job or career do you want to do? Q. Why do you want to do that job or career? Base: Participants who selected 'Yes' at D1 (n=734)



Reasons for being undecided on a career

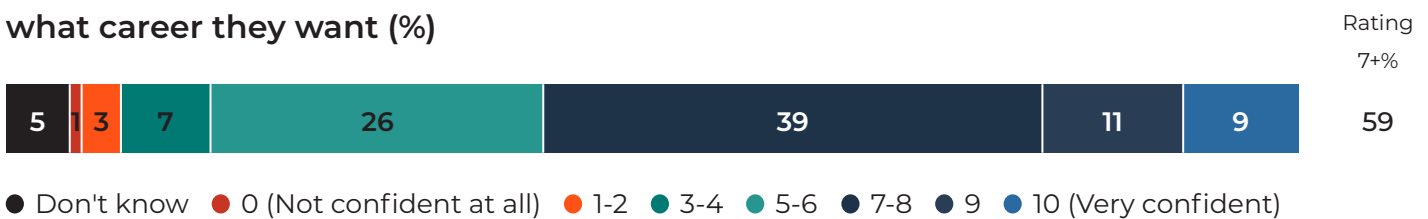
Indecision between ideas was the key reason for being undecided on a particular job or career, followed by simply being too young to be thinking about it. Just over 1 in 10 (14%) didn't want to think about it at all.



Children and young people's confidence in getting the job they want

A majority of children and young people (59%) feel confident that they will get the job they want, with only 10% saying they don't feel confident. Among those who are not confident of their career, the key factors for feeling this way included motivation, the cost of education, competition in the field, ambition and the money required to study full-time.

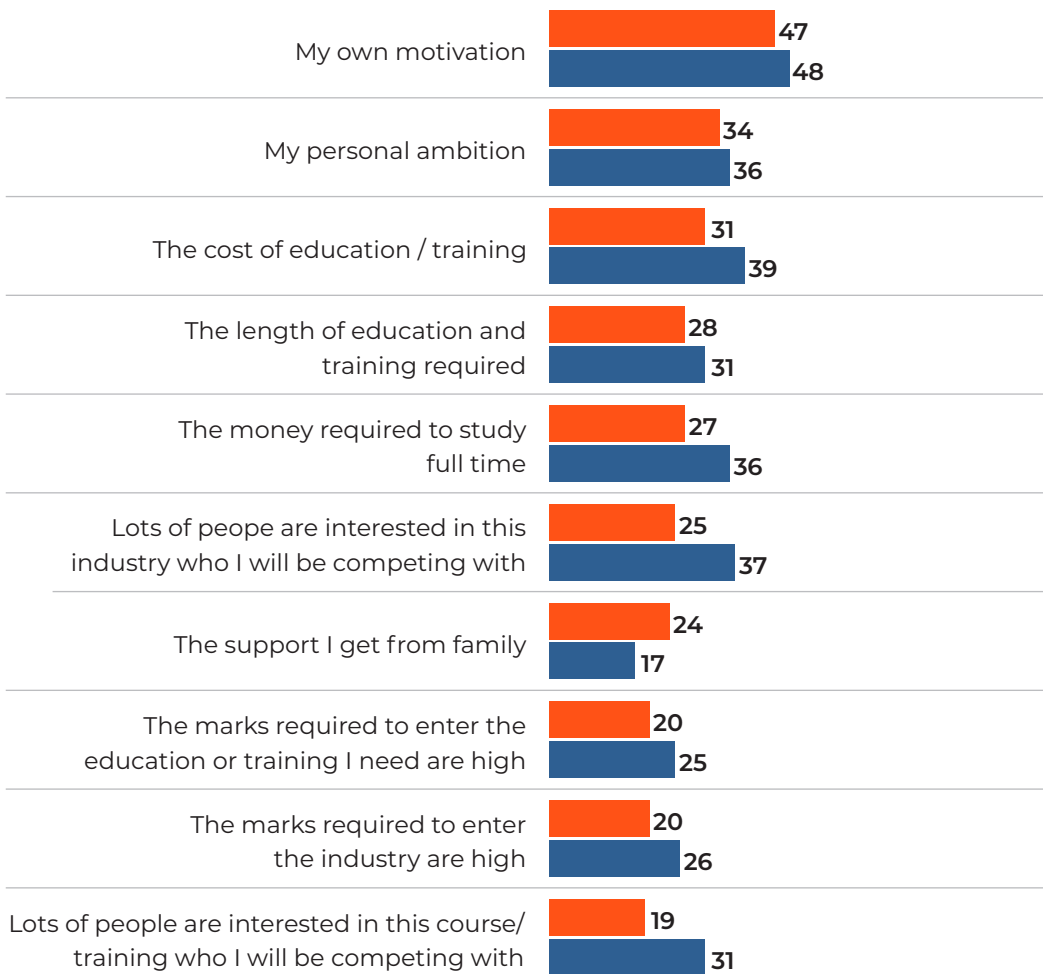
Confidence in getting the job that you want – of those who have an idea what career they want (%)



Q. Which of the following best describes why you don't have an idea of what job, career or industry you want to work in?
Base: Participants who selected 'No' at D1 (n=368)



Impact on your confidence in getting the job you want (%)



- Those who rated their confidence 7+/10
- Those who rated their confidence 0-4/10

Those more confident (7+/10):

- In the workforce **65%**
- Males aged 18+ **64%**
- Live in greater Sydney **62%**

Those less confident (0-4):

- LGBTQIA+ **21%**
- Has a mental health condition **15%**

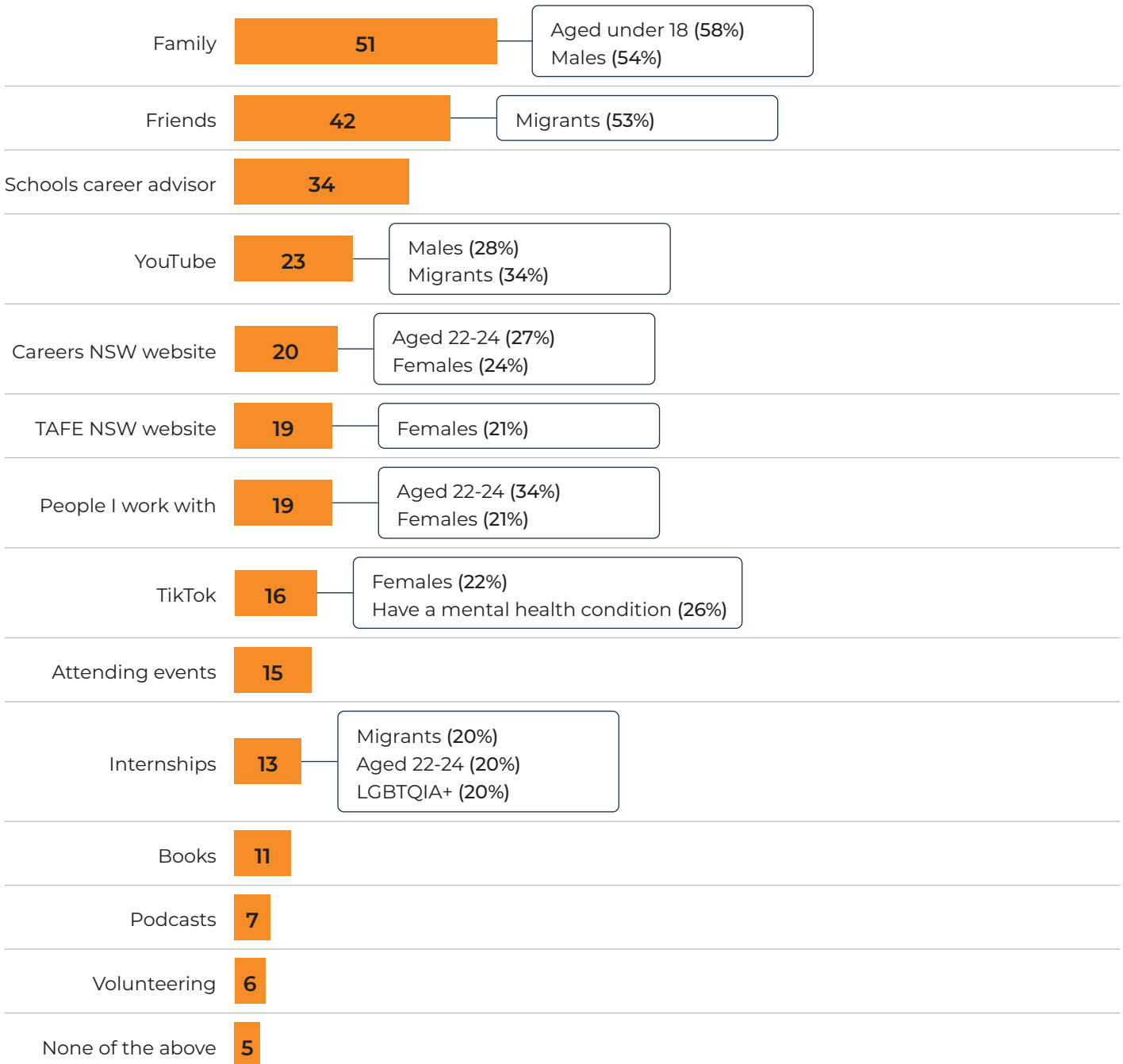
Where children and young people find quality information on education

When it comes to finding information on education and career choices, children and young people are most likely to go to family, friends and their school's career advisor. More felt their family would provide the best quality information, ahead of their school career advisor or the Careers NSW webpage. When then asked about who would give the "best quality" information, family and careers advisor remained prominent, followed by Careers NSW. While not explored in this data, this may indicate that further promotion of Careers NSW may benefit children and young people in thinking about their future.

Q. How confident are you that you will be able to get the job you want in the future?, Q. Which of the following impacts your confidence in getting the job you want in the future? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



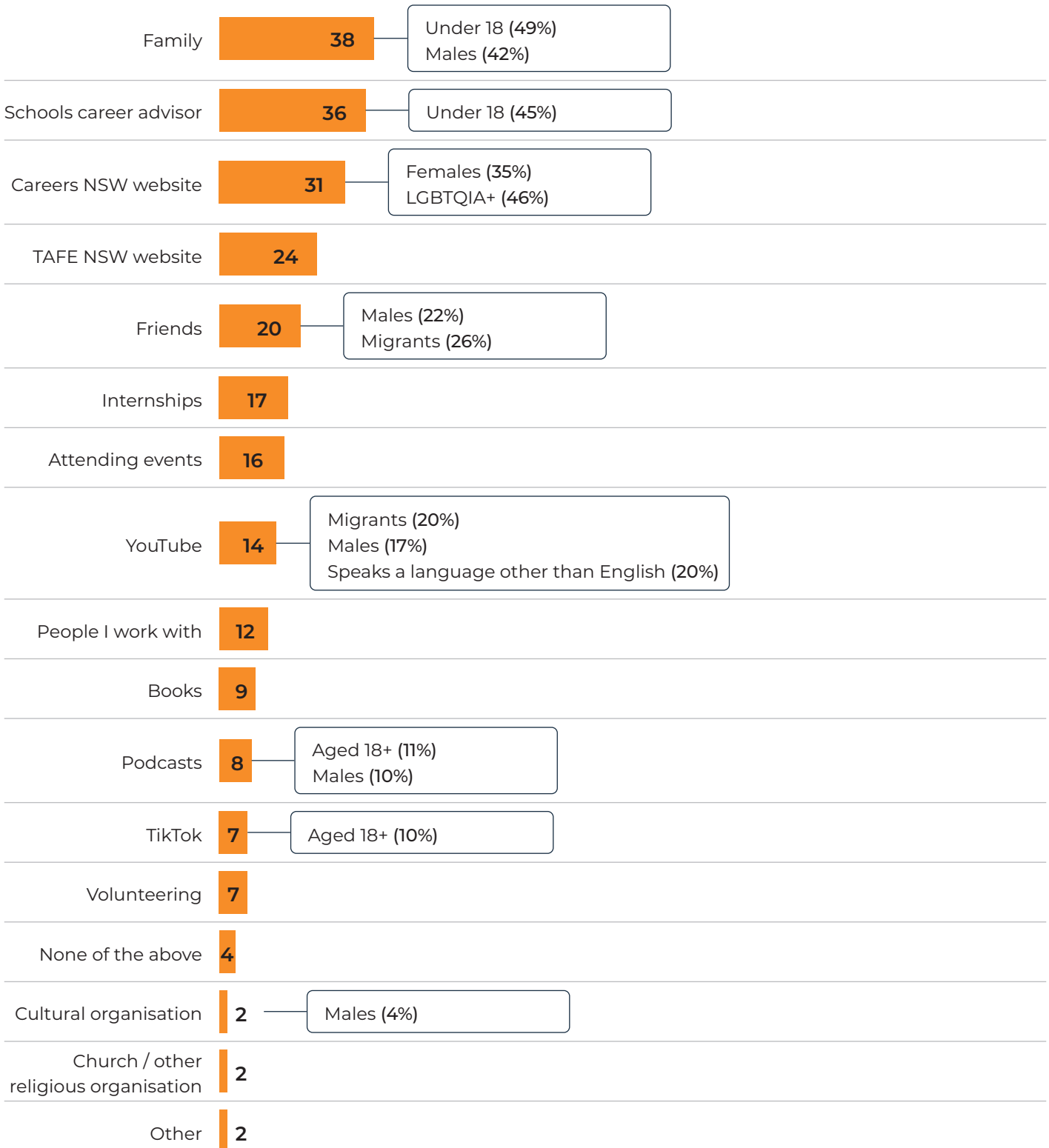
Where they find information on further education and career choices (%)



Q. Where do you get information about further education and career choices? Base: All participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Which would give the best quality information? (%)



Q. Which of these sources would give you the best quality information? Base: All participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Interest in jobs suffering from a worker shortage

Children and young people are more likely to be interested in pursuing health care, engineering and creative or performing arts roles. There is some additional interest in pursuing some careers after learning that they were facing a skills shortage, but 1 in 5 still felt they would not go into any of the listed careers. There were clear gender divides between many of the roles young people are interested in. Females were more likely to be interested in health-related careers, social sciences and teaching. Males were more likely to be interested in engineering, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and trades. Those who identified as culturally and linguistically diverse were significantly more likely to be interested in becoming a health care professional, ICT, cyber security or working in the public service.

Interest in careers – Top 10 (%)

	Interest – Unprompted	Interest – Prompted
Health care professional (e.g. doctor, nurse, dentist)	16	10
Engineer	16	10
Creative / performing arts	16	8
Sciences (chemistry, physics, biology)	16	10
Teacher (high school / primary school)	14	13
Information Communication Technology (ICT)	13	11
Media	13	10
Allied health professional (e.g. physio, chiro)	12	12
Social sciences (e.g. social work, psychology, youth work)	12	14
Cyber security	11	12

Interest in careers – Lower 8 (%)

	Interest – Unprompted	Interest – Prompted
Tradesperson (e.g. electrician, plumber, carpenter)	11	7
Government / politics / public service	11	10
Hospitality (e.g. food and accommodation)	10	7
Defence	8	8
Early childhood teacher	7	10
Mechanic	7	7
Agriculture or farming	6	6
Aged or disabled care worker	5	9

Q. Are you interested in any of the following jobs or careers? Q. In the future, Australia will need more people working in these jobs. Knowing there is a potential shortage of these jobs, would you be willing to consider the following jobs or careers? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Case Study: Hope for the Future

Co-designing with children and young people to enhance their interests and education

Children and young people in NSW are curious and each have their own interests, it is important that we create the opportunities and spaces for them to explore and develop these interests there are many examples across the state of organisations doing this work with children and young people at the centre.

Lismore Library Youth Space

In 2024, ACYP's Recovery Youth Support Service (RYSS) collaborated with local councils to gather feedback from community members and groups to contribute to place-based design projects. The RYSS team was contacted by the Lismore Area Librarian of the Richmond-Tweed Libraries requesting that ACYP consult with children and young people in the Lismore Local Government Area (LGA) to co-design a new youth space in the Lismore Library. The RYSS team heard in consultations that children and young people, particularly post disaster had limited spaces to explore and develop their skills and learning. They shared that it was critical when we rebuild communities post disaster that we continue to support the learning and interest of children and young people to keep them engaged in community, education and supported in recovery.

This collaboration highlights the importance of listening to children and young people to create meaningful spaces where they can explore their interests and engage in learning experiences that foster learning, growth, creativity, and community connection. The purpose of co-designing with children and young people is so that it resonates with the needs and their desires. Recognising that children and young people are key stakeholders in shaping their own future, this project was designed to ensure their voices were central in the planning process. This space is a place where children and young people can go to escape stress related to school or studying, this space can also be an opportunity for children and young people to reengage in education through non-formal pathways, such as tutors using this space. Ultimately assisting with the overall goal of decreasing disengagement from education.

In February 2024, the RYSS team, in line with ACYP best practice, co-designed a survey with eight students from Trinity Catholic College Lismore. The session was specifically structured to ensure that the consultations were youth-led and that the questions asked were both informative and engaging. This approach was vital in making young people feel included and respected, reinforcing the idea that their opinions and preferences matter in decisions about their community. It also empowered these young people through giving them a sense of ownership of the space from the start of the project.



Case Study: Hope for the Future

■ *Lismore Library Youth Space cont.*

Following this design session, the survey was submitted for approval to Lismore Council, and the RYSS team launched it in March 2024. A total of 213 young people participated from diverse groups, including students from Trinity Catholic College, Lismore Public School, Goonellabah Public School, Lismore Heights Public School, and members of Lismore's Headspace Young Peoples' Advisory Committee and PCYC Lismore. This broad participation ensured that the feedback gathered reflected a wide range of interests, experiences, and perspectives from local youth. This was important for the library as post-disaster, they wanted to create a space and environment that welcomed people that may not have previously come to the library.

The decisions made today about the design and functionality of spaces, particularly those meant for young people, will have a lasting impact on both current and future generations. By actively involving children and young people in shaping these spaces, the community acknowledges that their needs, desires, and input are valuable. This collaborative approach fosters a sense of belonging and ownership, while also encouraging young people to invest in their communities and take an active role in shaping their future.



Those more likely to report poor relationships with their immediate family in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Those struggling financially:

18%



Those with a mental illness:

15%



Neurodiverse children and young people:

14%



Those with a disability:

12%



Tertiary students:

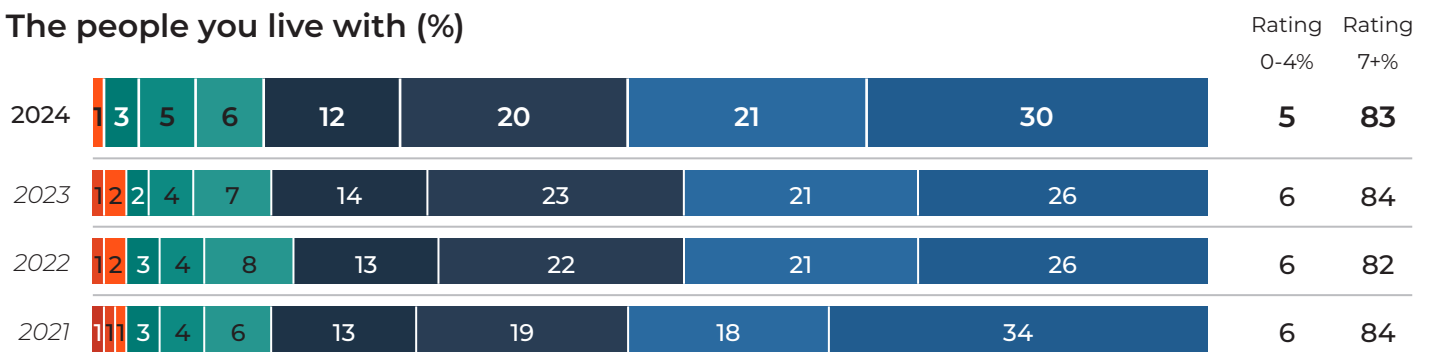
9%



Young people aged 18-24:

9%

The people you live with (%)



Those more likely to report poor relationships with those they live with in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Neurodiverse children and young people:

20%



Those struggling financially:

14%



Those with a mental illness:

13%



Those with a disability:

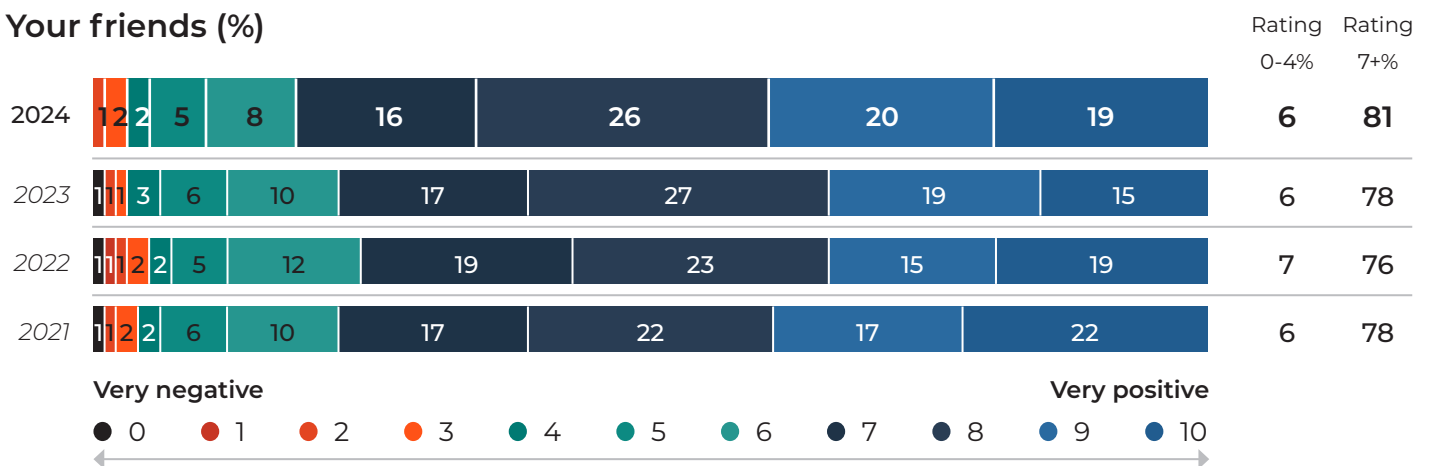
12%



Young people aged 18-24:

9%

Your friends (%)





Those more likely to report poor relationships with their friends in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Neurodiverse children and young people:

17%



Those with mental illness:

16%



Those struggling financially:

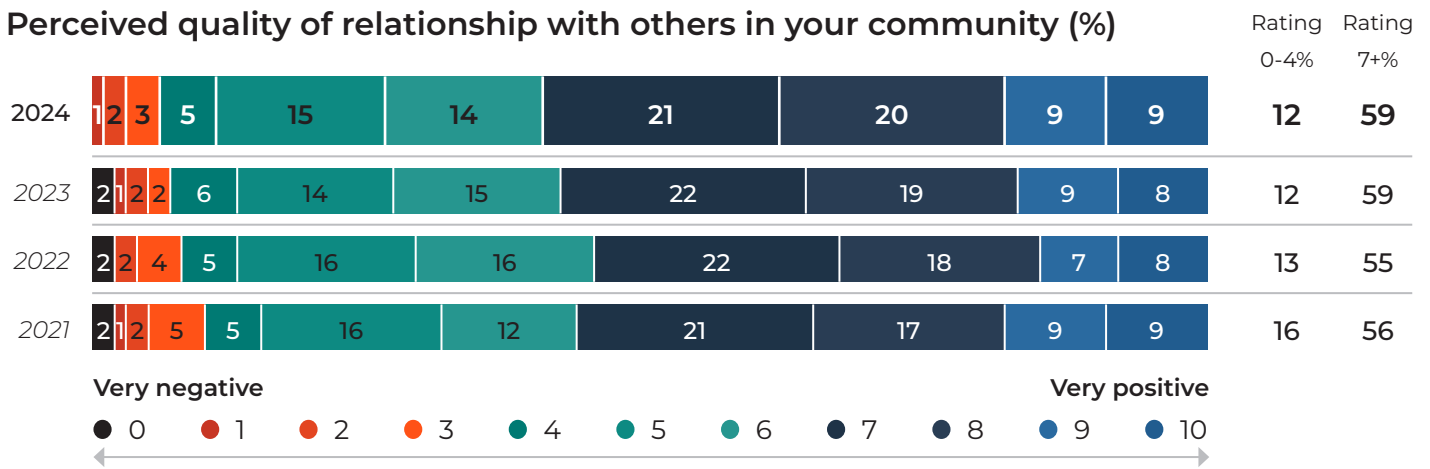
15%



Those with a disability:

14%

Perceived quality of relationship with others in your community (%)



Those more likely to report poor relationships with others in their community in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Those with a mental illness:

27%



Those struggling financially:

24%



LGBTQIA+ young people:

24%



Neurodiverse children and young people:

22%



Those with a disability:

21%



Females aged 18-24:

20%



Young people aged 18-24:

17%

Q. Now please think about the relationships you have with the people in your life. How would you rate the quality of your relationship with...? Base: All participants (2024: n=1,010, 2023: n=1,017, 2022: 1,005, 2021: n=815), *participants who don't live alone (2024: n=967, 2023: n=963, 2022: n=966, 2021: n=764).

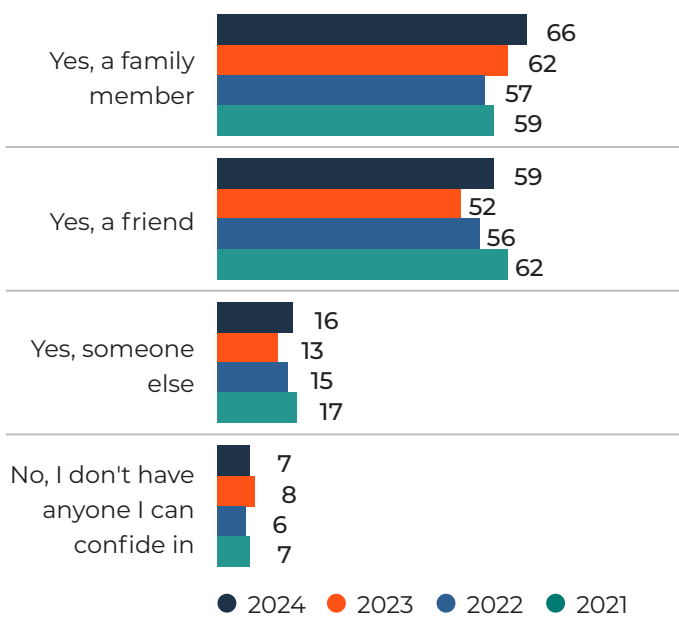


Someone to confide in

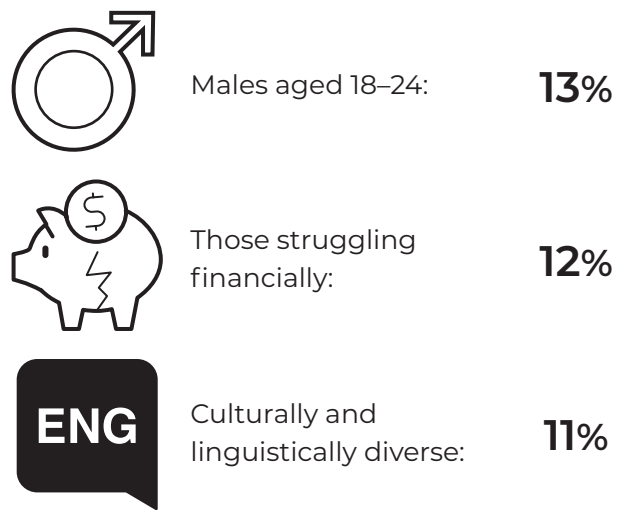
In 2024, 93% of children and young people felt they could confide in someone, and this measure has remained mostly consistent over the years. Concerningly, those most likely to say they had no one to confide in were males aged 18-24 (13%), those struggling financially (12%) and those who identified as culturally and linguistically diverse (11%).

The proportion of children and young people able to confide in family continues to grow incrementally over recent years. By contrast, the ability to confide in friends has fluctuated, having increased since 2023, but remaining slightly lower than the benchmark result.

Who children and young people feel they can confide in (%)



Most likely to have no one to confide in:



Experiences of bullying

Prevalence

One third of children and young people have experienced bullying in the last 12 months, indicating this remains a significant issue in NSW with many children and young people being impacted. This is consistent with the 2023 figure (36%) but is higher than the initial measure in 2021 (31%)³.

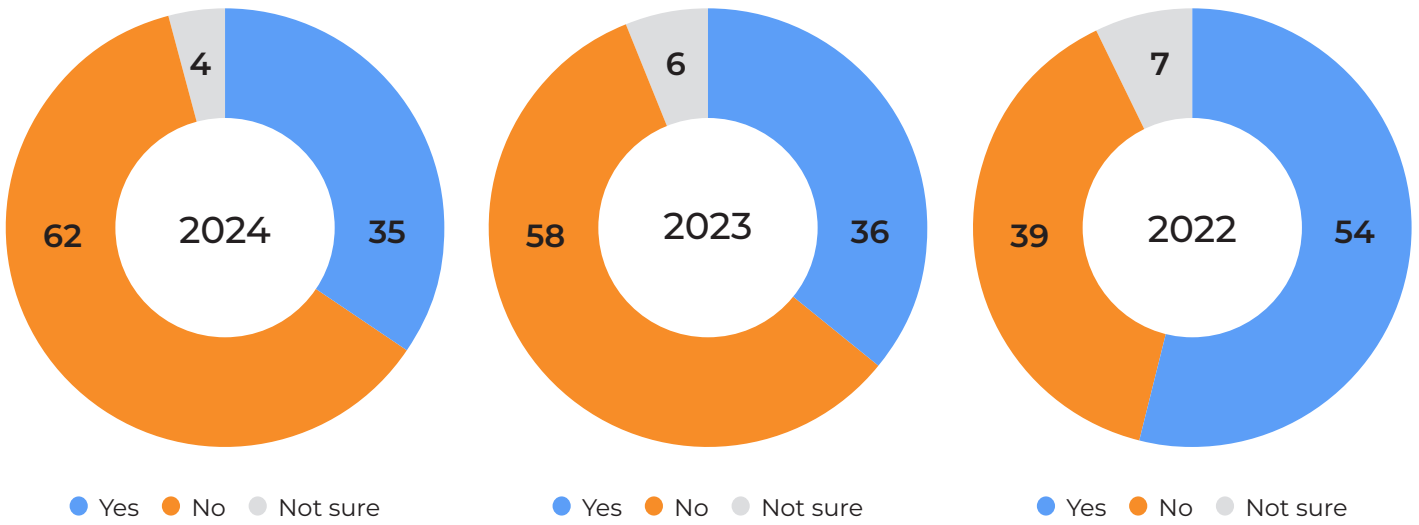
The experience of bullying is worryingly high among some groups, including more than half of children and young people who are neurodiverse, young parents, those with a disability, and those in primary school. While slightly lower, rates of bullying are also concerning for females aged 10-17, those with a mental illness, those aged 10-13 and those living in Regional NSW.

Q. Do you have someone – either a friend, family member or someone else – who you feel you can confide in?
Base: All participants (2024: n=1,010, 2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)

³ We note the 2021 can be considered indicative but cannot be compared directly to 2022 data, as there was a slight change to the question wording to make the data clearer. This 31% represents the percentage of participants who had experienced bullying in any location over the prior 12 months.



Experienced bullying in the last 12 months (%)



In 2021, 31% responded 'Yes'.

Those more likely to have experienced bullying in 2024:



Neurodiverse children and young people:

60%



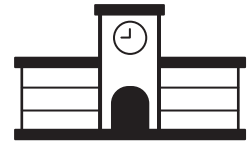
Young parents:

54%



Those with a disability:

52%



Those in primary school:

52%



Females aged 10-17:

49%



Those with mental illness:

48%



Those aged 10-13:

48%



Regional NSW:

47%

Q. In the last 12 months, have you personally experienced bullying?
Base: All participants who agreed to consented to answer questions on bullying (n=801)

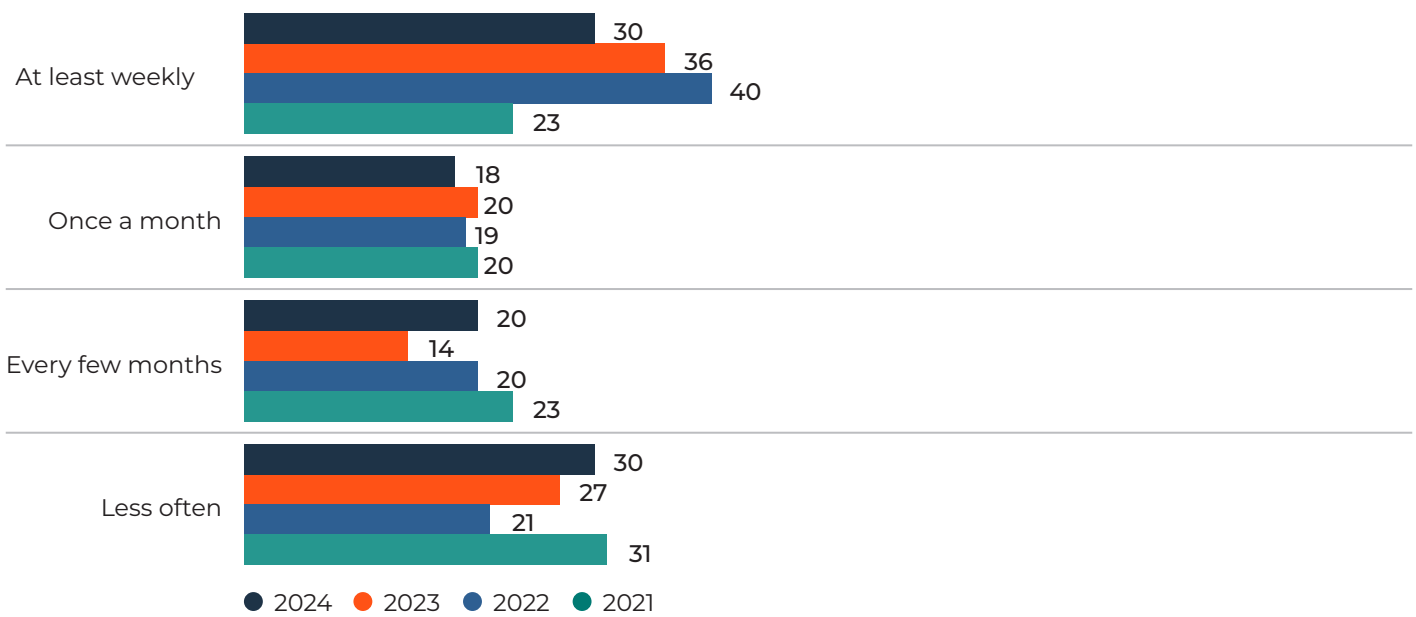


■ Frequency

Among those children and young people who had experienced bullying in the past 12 months, 30% experienced bullying weekly. While there was a decrease from 2023 (36%), and continuing a downward trend from 40% in 2022, this figure is still higher than the benchmark 23% in 2021 and is still a significant concern.

In 2024, bullying remains one of the top 10 issues facing children and young people in NSW, with 14% listing bullying unprompted and it has been a top 10 issue over since 2021.

Prevalence of bullying, amongst those who experienced bullying in the past 12 months... (%)



■ Focus

Children and young people said they were most likely to be bullied about their appearance or weight (35%), and social status (28%) up 6% from 2023, followed by their interests or hobbies (17%) and because of a relationship they are or were in (13%).

Over the last four years across all demographic groups, appearance or weight was the more frequent focus of bullying and is more prevalent for females (38%) compared to males (30%). In 2024, those reporting they experienced bullying related to their social status or popularity increased to 28%, up from 22% in 2023. Again, this was a greater issue for females (34%) compared to males (20%).

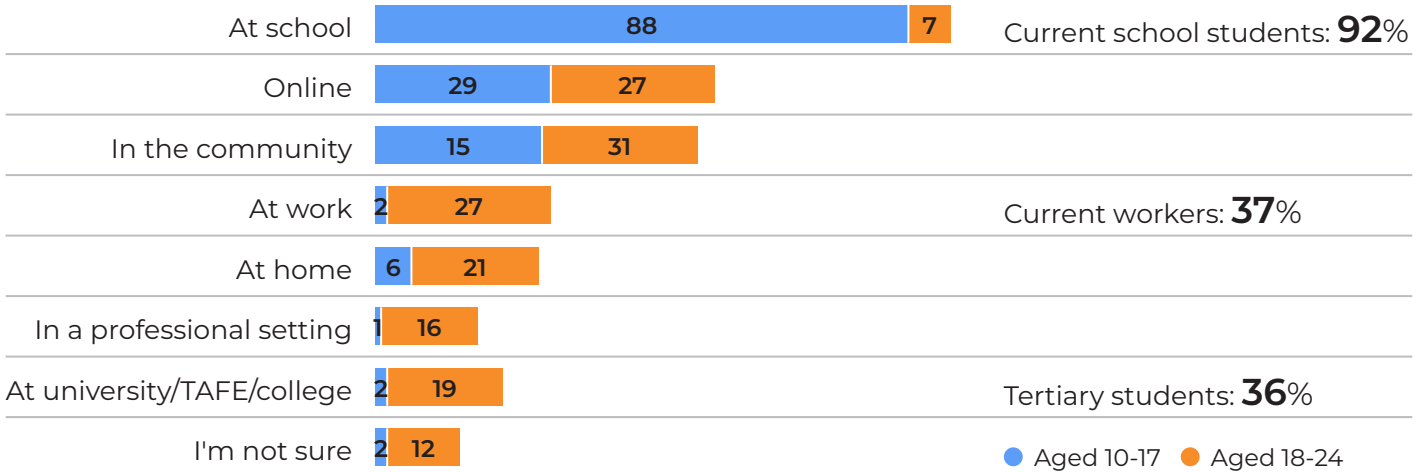
Q. How often have you experienced bullying over the past 12 months? (n=801)



Location

The location of bullying varied greatly by age – largely because school students were most likely to be bullied at school (92%), and those in the workforce were most likely to be bullied at work (37%). For those aged 18-24, the most likely location to be bullied was in the community at 31%, at work 27% and at home 21%.

Where bullying occurred – 2024 (%)



Love, Connection and Safety in Focus

As part of its own commitments under the final year of the Strategic Plan, ACYP has focused on 'Hope for the Future' and 'Love, Connection and Safety' as areas to explore in more detail in 2024. As a result, the questions below were added to the 2024 Youth Week survey to explore the experiences of children and young people when it comes to the topics they have highlighted to ACYP as being important to them; the skills they want to learn about for daily life and career paths.

Belonging and Identity

Aspects that shape identity

The friendships children and young people have is the number one factor that shapes their identity, followed by their hobbies. Education is also a significant marker of identity, particularly for migrant children and young people. Males are more likely to use sport as a marker of identity, while females are more likely to feel their gender and personal style shape their identity.

Q. There is never a justification for bullying, but the next question asks what you were bullied about. So thinking about the bullying you have experienced in the past 12 months, do you think it was related to any of the following?

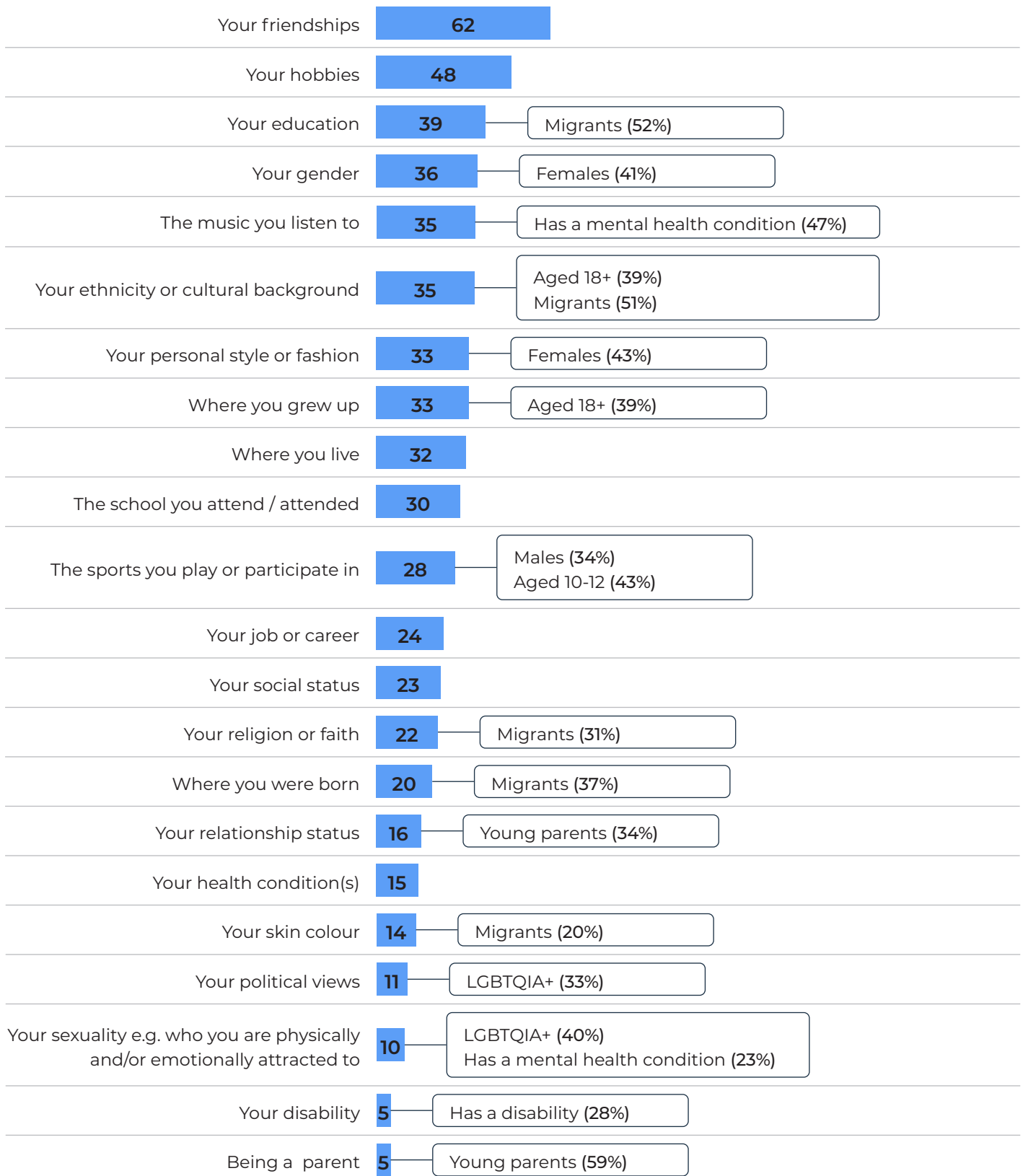
Base: Those who have experienced bullying, excluding those who are 'not sure' about its places or situations (n=259)

Q. In the past 12 months, in which places or situations have you personally experienced bullying?

Base: Those who have experienced bullying (2023: n=274, 2022: n=274, 2021: n=237), *school students (2024: n=175, 2023: n=188, 2022: n=164, 2021: n=118), **those who are working (2024: n=83, 2023: n=83, 2022: n=92, 2021: n=87)



Aspects that shape how you understand your identity (%)



Q. To begin, choose up to seven from the list below that most shape who you are or how you understand your identity?
Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)

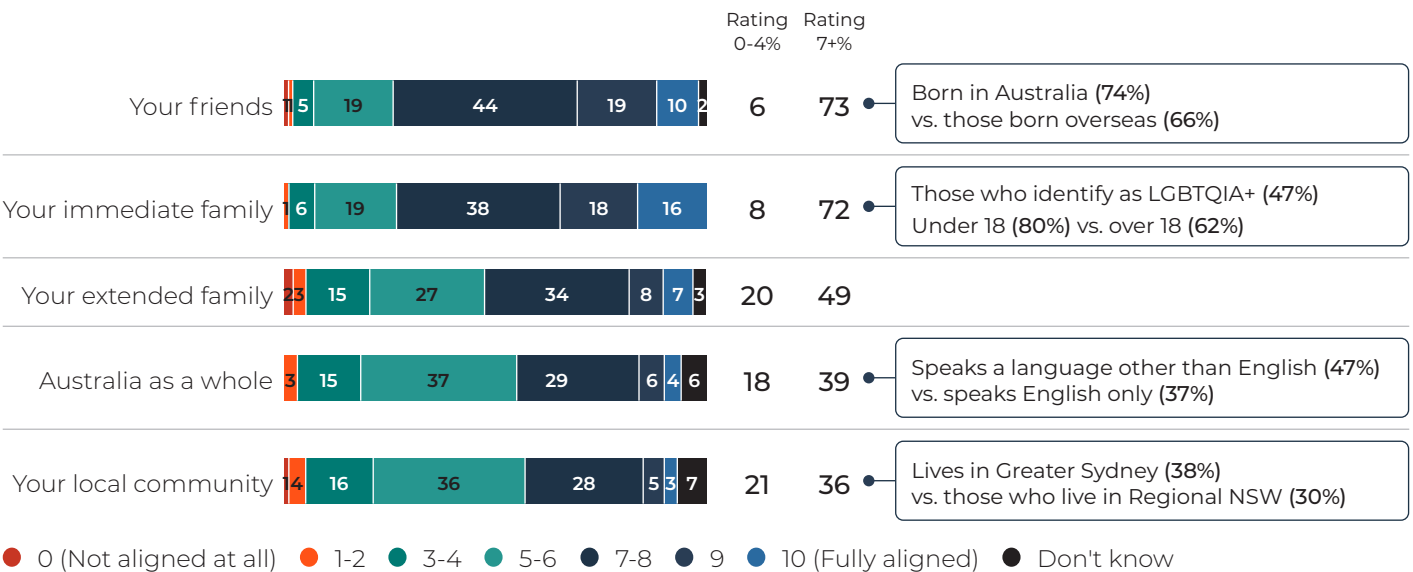


Male	Female	Under 18	Over 18	Migrants	Young parents	LGBTQIA+
Your friendships 59%	Your friendships 66%	Your friendships 67%	Your friendships 57%	Your friendships 59%	Being a parent 59%	Your hobbies 62%
Your hobbies 50%	Your hobbies 47%	Your hobbies 47%	Your hobbies 50%	Your education 52%	Your friendships 40%	Your friendships 61%
Your education 41%	Your personal style or fashion 43%	The school you attend or attended 42%	Your education 41%	Ethnicity / cultural background 51%	Your education 37%	The music you listen to 46%
Sports you play or participate in 34%	Your gender 41%	Your gender 40%	Ethnicity / cultural background 39%	Your hobbies 45%	Where you grew up 35%	Your gender 42%
Ethnicity / cultural background 34%	The music you listen to 40%	The music you listen to 39%	Where you grew up 39%	Your gender 41%	Your relationship status 34%	Your sexuality 40%

Who do children and young people feel most aligned to?

The majority of children and young people feel most aligned with the people they spend most time with – their friends and immediate family. Alignment of beliefs is mixed when looking outside of their immediate circle, with fewer than half feeling their values are aligned with their extended family, their local community and with Australia as a whole.

Alignment of attitudes and beliefs to the following groups (%)



Q. To begin, choose up to seven from the list below that most shape who you are or how you understand your identity? Base: All participants, 2024 (n=1,102), Males (n=562), Females (n=540), Under 18 (n=526), Over 18 (n=576), Migrant (n=248), Young parent (n=35), LGBTQIA+ (n=108)
 Q. How much do you feel your attitudes and beliefs align to the following groups? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Comfort expressing your 'true self'

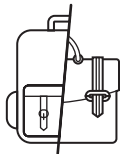
Most children and young people are comfortable expressing their true selves in their everyday life – with 2 in 3 being comfortable (67%), and fewer than 1 in 10 (8%) uncomfortable. However, those not studying or working, those with a mental health illness, those with a disability and those who identify as LGBTQIA+ are significantly less likely to feel comfortable.

How comfortable young people are at expressing their 'true self' (%)



● Don't know ● 0 (Not comfortable at all) ● 1-2 ● 3-4 ● 5-6 ● 7-8 ● 9 ● 10 (Very comorable)

Those who were less comfortable (rating 0-4/10)



Those not working or studying:

30%



Those with mental illness:

17%



Those with a disability:

16%



LGBTQIA+ young people:

14%

Comfort expressing your 'true self' in different contexts

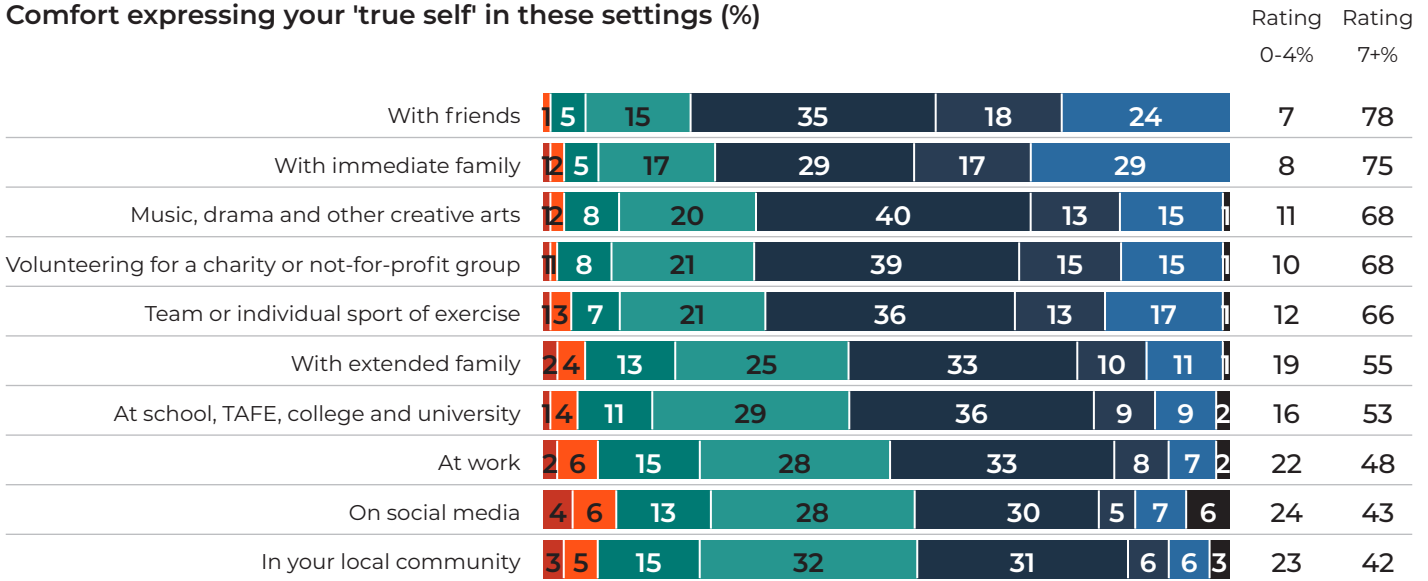
Children and young people are especially comfortable being their true selves with friends and family. The creative arts, volunteering and sport or exercise were also contexts in which young people felt they could express themselves comfortably. However, only around half felt, comfortable in education settings (53%) or at work (48%). Around one in four felt uncomfortable expressing their true self on social media (24%) or in their local community (23%).

Young people aged 18-24 years old were less likely than their younger counterparts to feel comfortable with family, in their community, and in engaging in sports, the arts, or volunteering. LGBTQIA+ young people were also less likely to feel comfortable with family, in their community, in engaging with sports, but also at work.

Q. Overall, to what extent do you feel comfortable expressing your identity, beliefs and being your 'true self' in your everyday life? Q. What needs to change for you to feel a better sense of belonging in your everyday life? Q. What makes you feel a sense of belonging in your everyday life? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Comfort expressing your 'true self' in these settings (%)

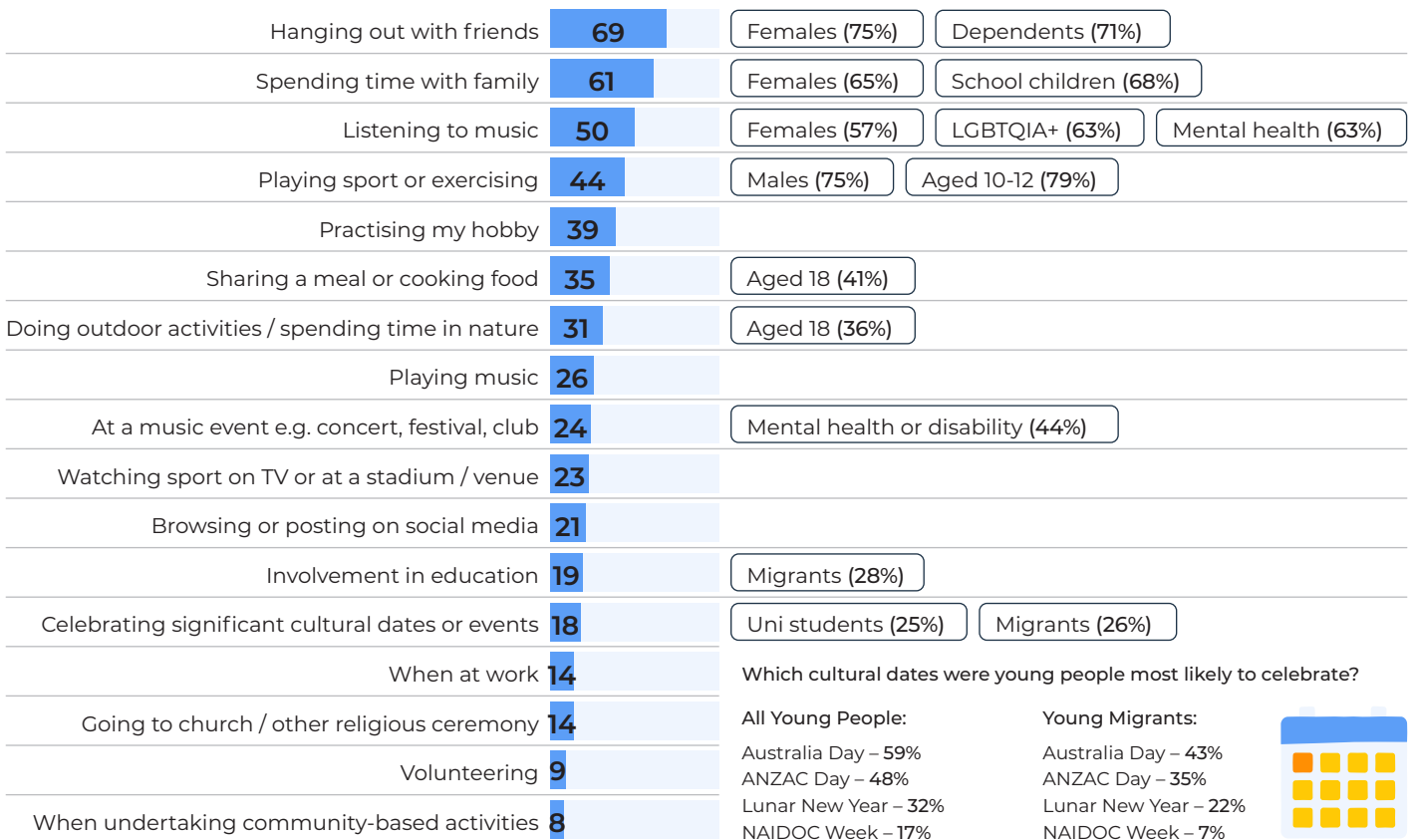


● 0 (Not comfortable at all) ● 1-2 ● 3-4 ● 5-6 ● 7-8 ● 9 ● 10 (Very comfortable) ● Don't know

Sense of belonging and connectedness

While family and friends are paramount in fostering belonging for children and young people, music, sport and hobbies all play a key role in connecting with others

In which of these settings do you feel a sense of belonging and connectedness with others? (%)



Q. To what extent do you feel comfortable expressing your identity, beliefs and being your 'true self' in the following settings? Base: All participants, 2024 (n=1,102) Q. In which of these settings do you feel a sense of belonging and connectedness with others? Q. Which of the following cultural dates or events do you celebrate? Base: all participants, 2024 (n=1,102)



Case Study: Love, Connection and Safety

Working with children and young people to increase their sense of identity and belonging

Across NSW there are many good practice examples of programs designed to help children and young people increase their sense of identity and belonging. Children and young people want to connect with others, and they want to belong to a community, programs that develop foster this connectedness are vital.

Plan C

In recent years, children and young people have shown incredible strength and resilience in the face of compounding disasters. Even so, their sense of individual and communal safety has been threatened.

Plan C is a not-for-profit located in the Northern Rivers of NSW, with a mission to build resilience and regenerative capacities of Australian communities in the face of future disasters and crises.

In 2024, Plan C received funding from Multicultural NSW as part of their Community Partnership Action (COMPACT) Program for their “NextGen Navigators; empowering youth for community resilience” project.”

The key objectives of the NextGen Navigator project are to empower young people in the Northern Rivers to become resilient community leaders, equipped with skills in disaster resilience, leadership, and community organisation. Ultimately, the program develops relationships between young people in the program and the broader community to increase their sense of identity and belonging.

A key strength of the program is that by focusing on place-based recruitment and initiatives, children and young people are able to connect with peers who share similar life experiences of disaster, while also expanding their social and friendships groups, creating a wider support network for them to rely on. By engaging in a peer-peer to learning model, children and young people develop skills and relationships with a role-model and mentor who they can turn to for advice and support.

The project aims to foster social cohesion by countering extremism, hate, and misinformation, particularly during crises such as natural disasters and socio-economic disruptions. Starting in 2024 and until 2028 “NextGen Navigators” involves a total of 240 young people recruited through schools, youth organisations, universities and community networks. All young people will undergo workshops on community resilience and leadership. All young people will then be supported in designing and implementing their community resilience projects which will enhance social cohesion and it is an opportunity for all participants to showcase what they have learned.

By delivering trauma-informed training and supporting participants in designing and implementing community projects, the initiative seeks to strengthen community resilience, promote inclusivity, and build robust networks across diverse youth groups, ultimately preparing young leaders to actively contribute to a more united and harmonious society.



03. Health and Wellbeing

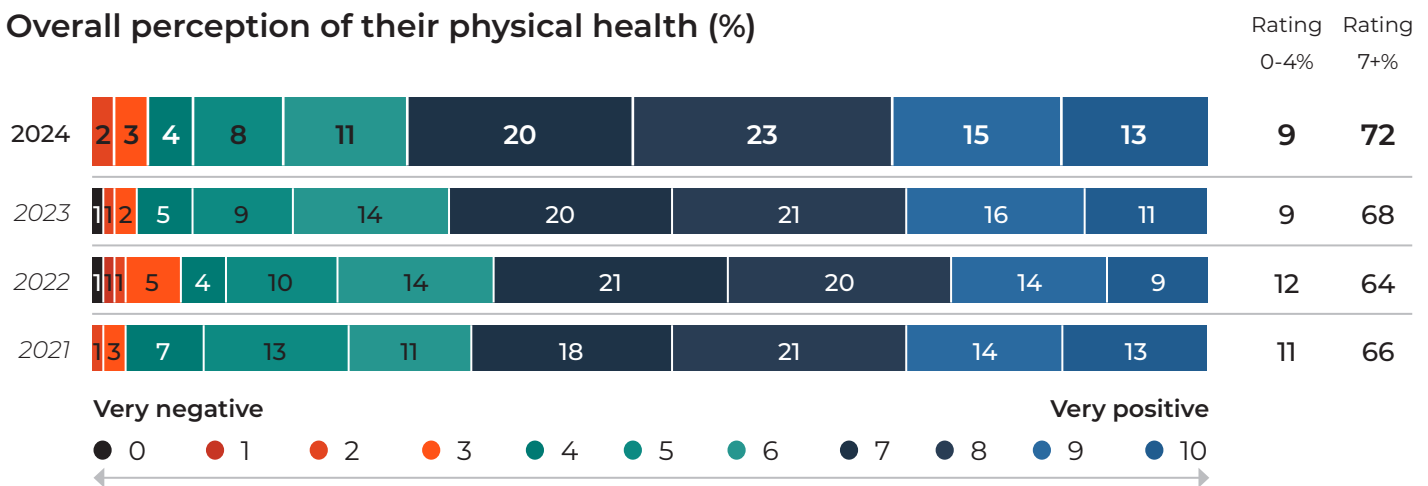
Children and young people’s mental, physical and emotional health is nurtured and supported to enable them to flourish.

Physical and mental health ratings have both increased since last year and are both higher than the benchmark results. This aligns with increases from 2023 about life sentiment. Point-in-time measures about happiness, optimism for the future haven’t seen the same increase but have remained steady, despite increases in anxiety over the past four years. The majority of young people remain resilient, which hasn’t changed over time. Notably that despite hardships, many of the groups with poorer outcomes rate themselves as just as resilient as their peers.

Self-rated physical and mental health

Children and young people are significantly more positive about their physical and mental health this year, with both indicators at record highs over the past four years. Despite the uplift, there remains a sizeable minority who are less positive about their mental health. Those most likely to feel that their physical and mental health were both poor were; those with a mental illness, those struggling financially, and those with a disability. Mental health was also of particular concern for those who identify as LGBTQIA+, females aged 18-24 and those who had experienced discrimination.

Overall perception of their physical health (%)



Those more likely to feel that their physical health is poor in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Those with mental illness:
19%

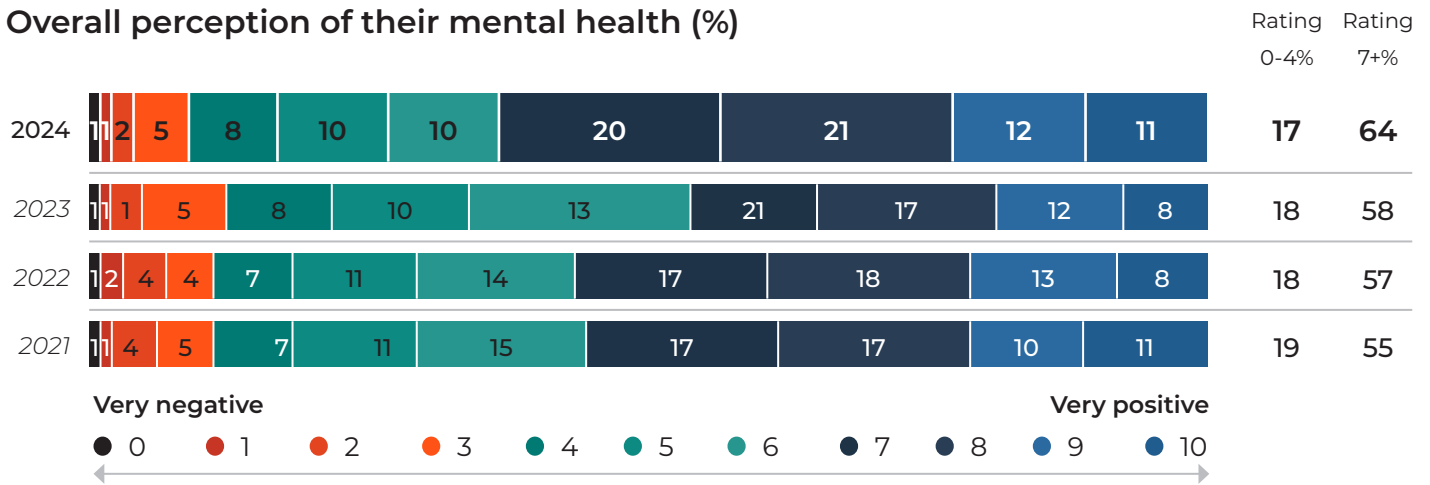


Those struggling financially
19%



Those with a disability:
15%

Overall perception of their mental health (%)



Those more likely to feel that their mental health is poor in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Those with a mental illness:
52%



Those with a disability:
37%



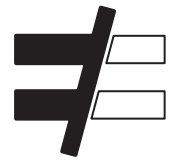
Those struggling financially:
36%



LGBTQIA+ young people:
34%



Females aged 18-24:
28%



Experienced discrimination:
27%

Q. How would you rate your overall physical and mental health? Base: All participants (2024:n=1,010, 2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)

Self-rated happiness, anxiety and resilience

A majority of young people reported feeling happy on the day they completed the survey, consistent with previous years after increasing in 2022. Despite this, around 3 in 10 (29%) reported a high level of anxiety and this proportion has increased gradually year on year.

Consistent with previous years, rates of happiness were higher among younger age brackets and decreased with age. ACYP notes that while younger children and young people were more likely to report positive scores for happiness at this point-in-time measure, broader, ongoing concerns about their mental health should not be dismissed. Those who were most likely to feel unhappy were those with a mental illness with 32% rating a negative 0 to 4 out of 10 and those with a physical disability with 29% rating a negative 0 to 4 out of 10.

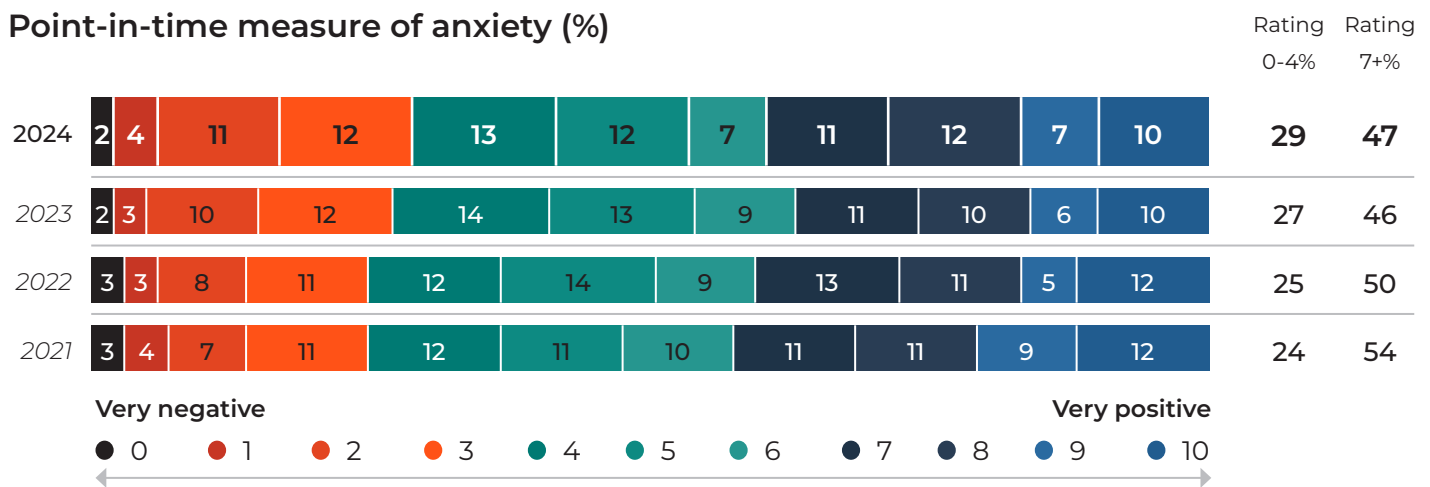
Feelings of anxiety have gradually increased year on year. In 2024, 29% of children and young people rated their point in time feelings of anxiety a negative 7 or more out of 10, up from 24% in 2021. Those who were most likely to feel more anxious were those with a mental illness (44%) and those struggling financially (42%).

In contrast to changes in happiness and anxiety since the benchmark study, perceptions of resilience remain relatively steady, with a slight majority (57%) seeing themselves as a resilient person. Those with a mental health condition were more likely to struggle with their sense of resilience, with 27% rating a negative 0 to 4 out of 10.

Point-in-time measure of happiness (%)



Point-in-time measure of anxiety (%)



Q. Overall, how happy do you feel today? Q. Overall, how anxious do you feel today?
 Base: All participants (2024:n=1,010, 2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)



04. A Good Standard of Living

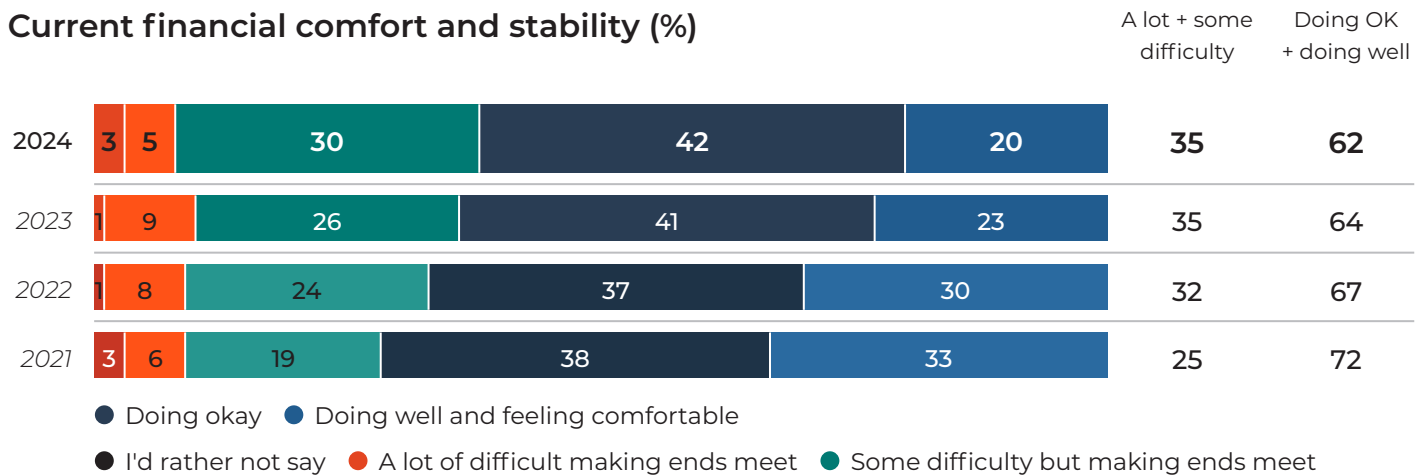
Children and young people are provided with the necessities they need to thrive. Children and young people do not live in poverty and are provided with adequate services and resources to operate in society.

Reported financial situation

The gradual erosion in young people's financial situation has continued this year, with fewer reporting they are 'doing well and feeling comfortable' and more reporting they are having 'some difficulty' making ends meet. Concerningly, 35% of young people still report having 'a lot' or 'some' difficulty making ends meet – a 10% increase since 2021 baseline results. High cost of living is still the number one unprompted issue faced by children and young people in NSW at 33%.

There are some groups who with much higher ratings of financial difficulties, such as those who had experienced discrimination, those with a mental illness, those with a disability, tertiary students and females.

Current financial comfort and stability (%)

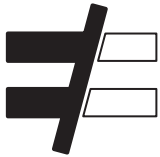


Q. Which of the following best describes your financial situation?

Base: Those aged 18+ or financially independent (2024: n=515, 2023: n=509, 2022: n=513, 2021: n=484)



Those more likely to feel they are having some or a lot of difficulty making ends meet in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Experienced discrimination:

49%



Those with a mental illness:

47%



Those with a disability:

44%



Tertiary students:

43%



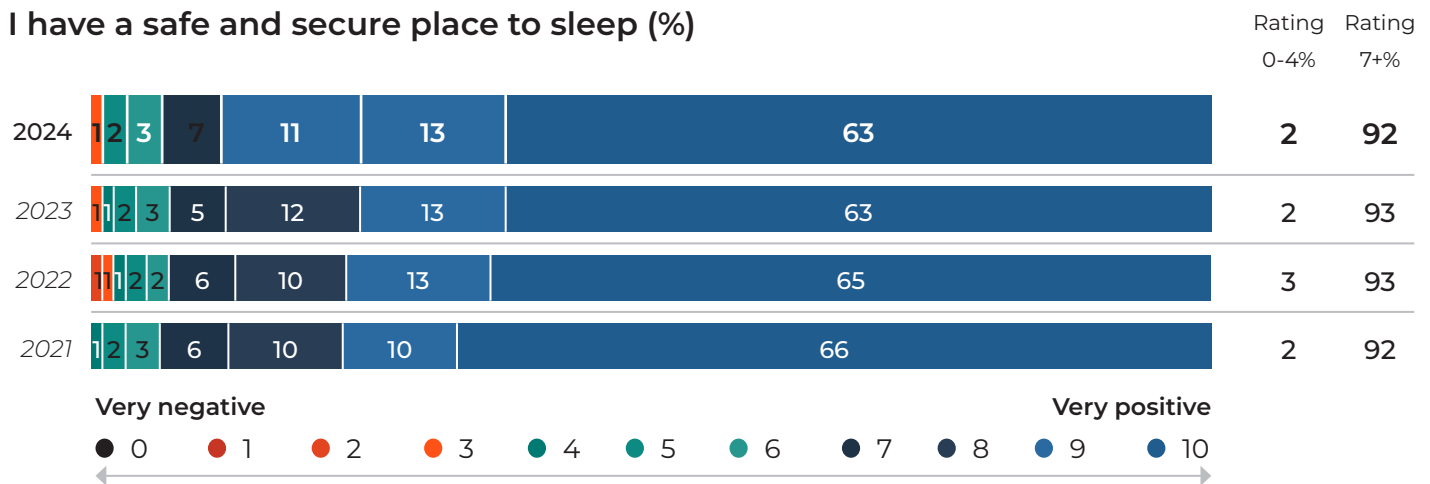
Females:

41%

Access to basic needs

In 2024, most children and young people feel their basic living needs are being met adequately, in terms of food, shelter, and clothing. While access to day-to-day essentials has remained relatively stable, fewer are reporting to be able to eat a balanced and healthy diet if they want to, now at 81% from 85% in 2023.

I have a safe and secure place to sleep (%)



Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



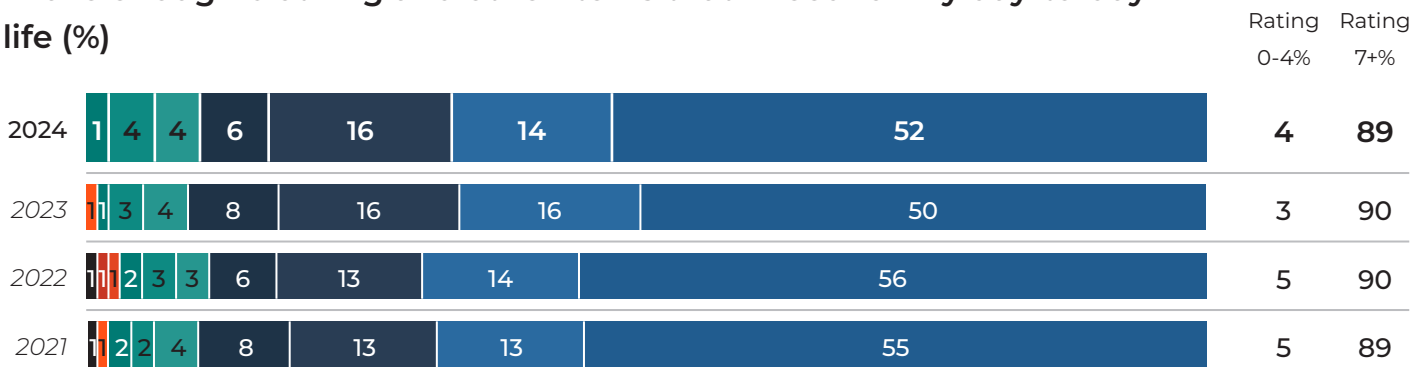
Those struggling financially⁴:

5%

⁴ In contrary to previous years this cohort was the only statistically significant demographic.



I have enough clothing and other items that I need for my day-to-day life (%)



Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



TAFE/VET students

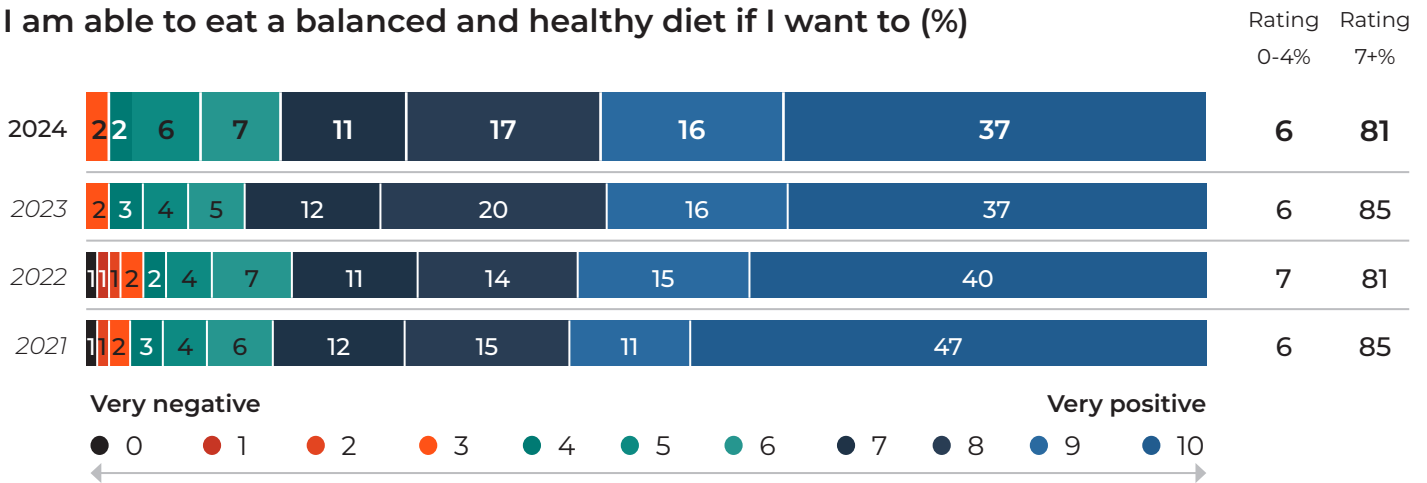
13%



Those struggling financially

11%

I am able to eat a balanced and healthy diet if I want to (%)



Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2024 (rating 0-4/10)



Neurodiverse children and young people:

20%



Those struggling financially:

16%



Those with a disability:

14%



Those with a mental illness:

14%



Tertiary students:

11%



05. Environments for Joy and Fun

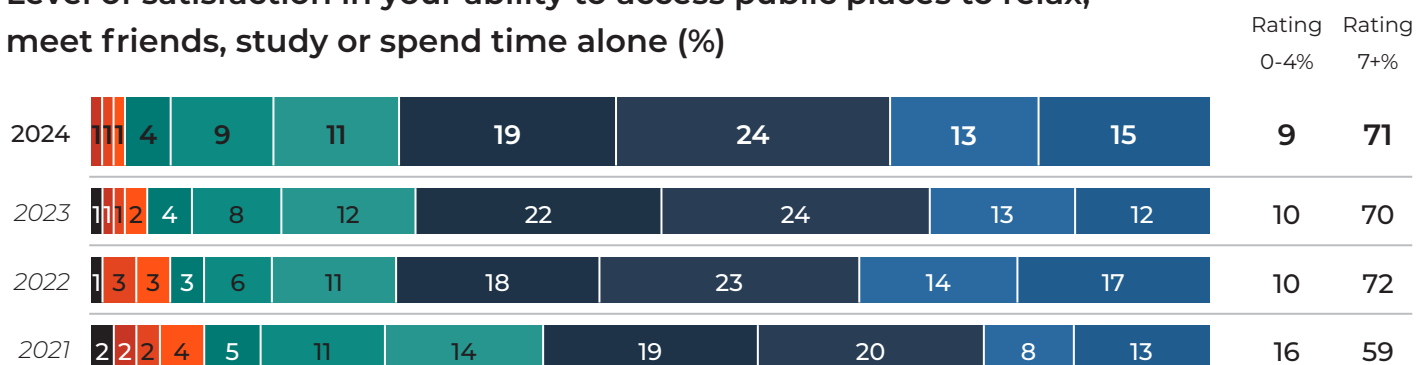
Children and young people have spaces and opportunities to engage in activities for recreation and leisure. These spaces are enjoyable, welcoming, and safe.

Satisfaction with local fun activities

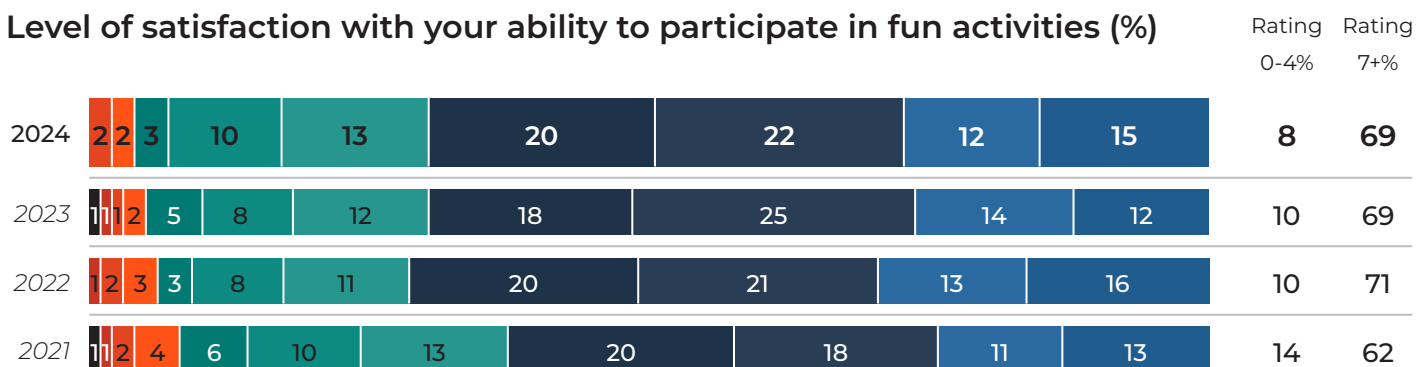
In 2024, the satisfaction with activities for fun and recreation remains consistent this year. Satisfaction is higher for the availability of spaces for leisure and fun activities broadly, than for the actual activities available locally.

There was a positive increase in children and young people’s participation in sport or physical activity with 63% rating a positive 7+ out of 10, continuing an upward trend since the benchmark result, 53% in 2021.

Level of satisfaction in your ability to access public places to relax, meet friends, study or spend time alone (%)



Level of satisfaction with your ability to participate in fun activities (%)

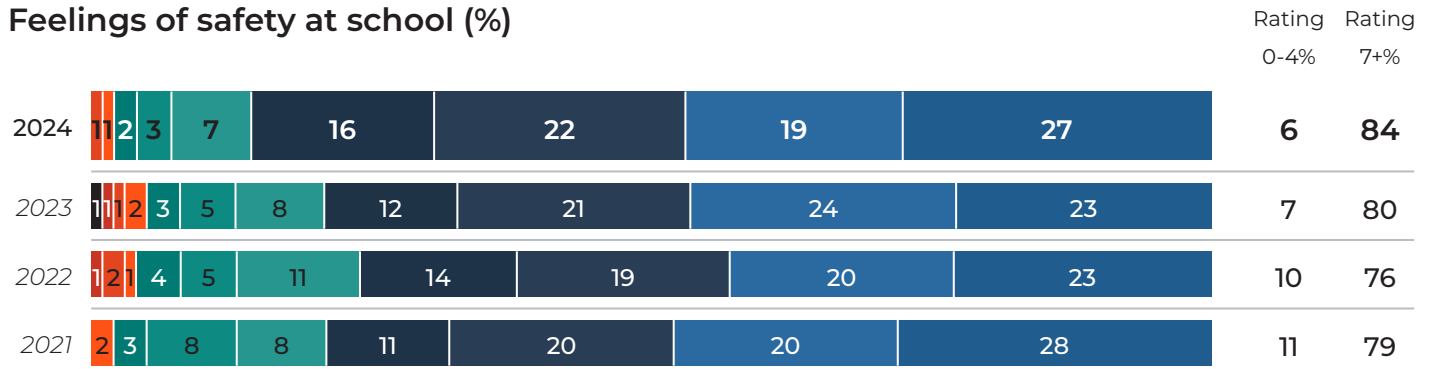




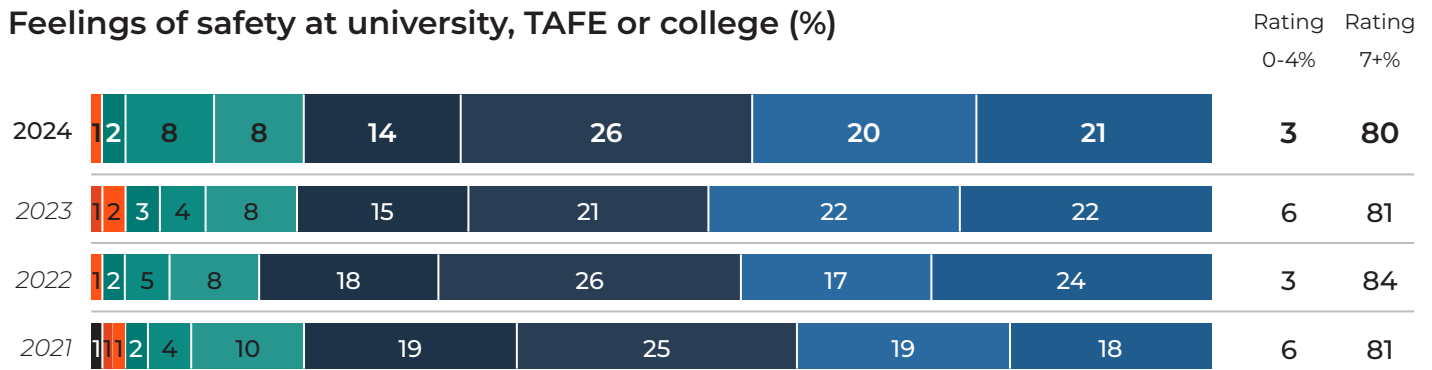
Feeling safe in public situations

While a majority of young people feel safe in public situations, there has been a significant decline in feelings of safety in the workplace this year. In line with previous findings, children and young people are less likely to feel safe online and in the general community than in school, tertiary education or at work.

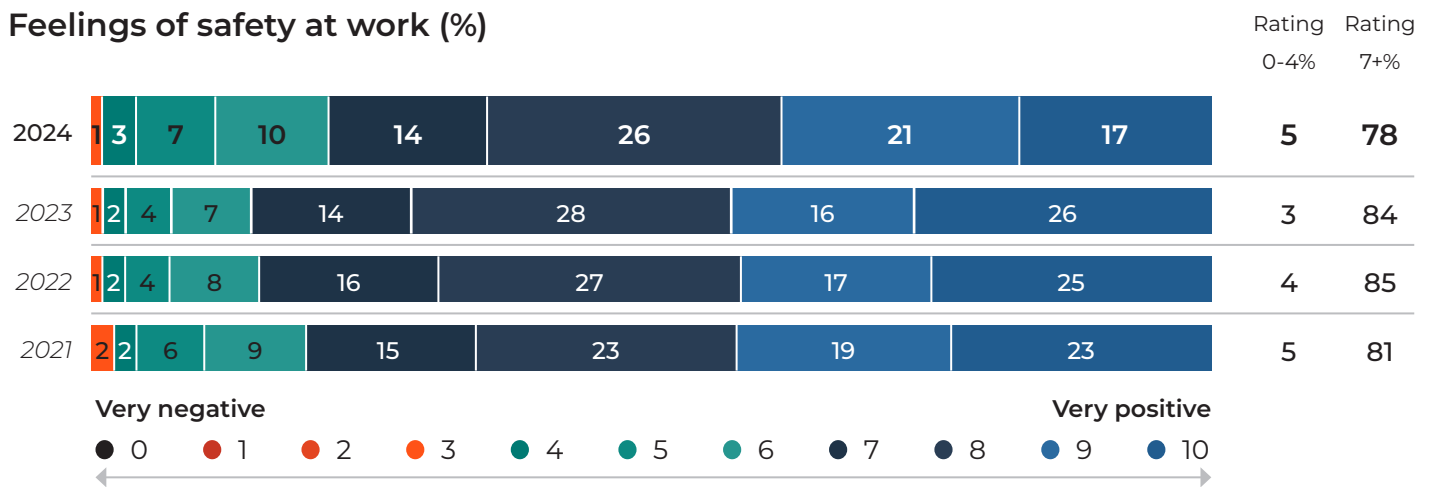
Feelings of safety at school (%)



Feelings of safety at university, TAFE or college (%)



Feelings of safety at work (%)



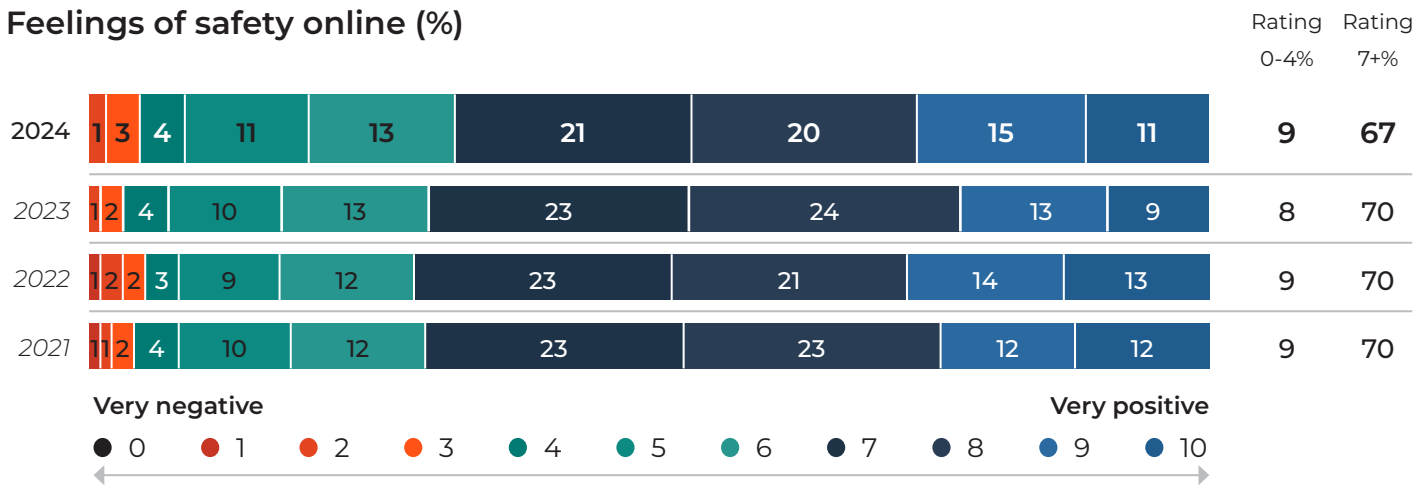
Q. To what extent do you feel safe when you are in these different situations? Base: All participants (2024: n=1,010, 2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005), School students (2024: n=512, 2023: n=513, 2022: n=517, 2021: 360), Tertiary students (2024: n=281, 2023: n=261, 2022: n=253, 2021: n=294), those who are working (2024: n=374, 2023: n=379, 2022: n=373, 2021: n=310)



Feelings of safety in public areas around your local community (%)



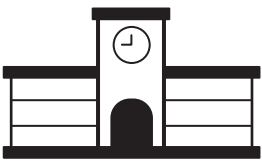
Feelings of safety online (%)



Those with a mental illness and neurodivergent children and young people were least likely to feel safe in most situations, including at school, in public areas and online.

Those more likely to report feeling unsafe in 2024 at (rating 0-4/10)

At school:



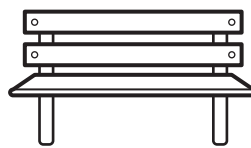
- Neurodiverse.....**22%**
- Has a mental health condition.....**21%**
- Young parents.....**14%**
- Experienced discrimination..... **11%**

Online:



- Neurodiverse.....**20%**
- Has a mental health condition.....**18%**
- First Nations.....**19%**

Public areas:



- Has a chronic illness.....**23%**
- Has a mental health condition.....**20%**
- Neurodiverse.....**20%**
- First Nations.....**15%**
- LGTBQIA+.....**14%**

At work:



- Recent refugees or migrants.....**33%**
- Young parents.....**20%**
- Neurodiverse.....**16%**



06. Respect and Acceptance

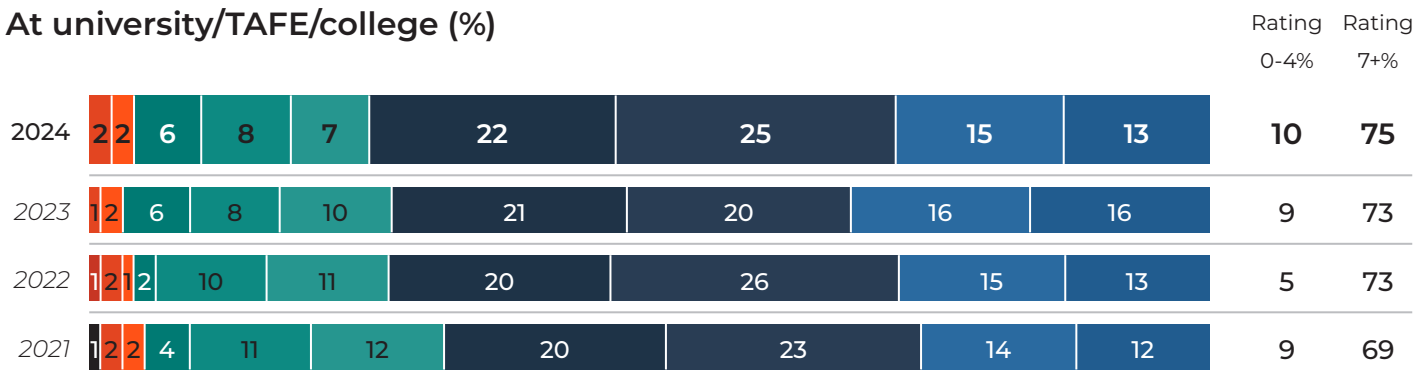
Children and young people feel respected, accepted and included in society. They are part of a community that supports them to be proud of their culture, diversity and individual identity. They are free from discrimination, racism and structural violence.

Level of respect and acceptance experienced

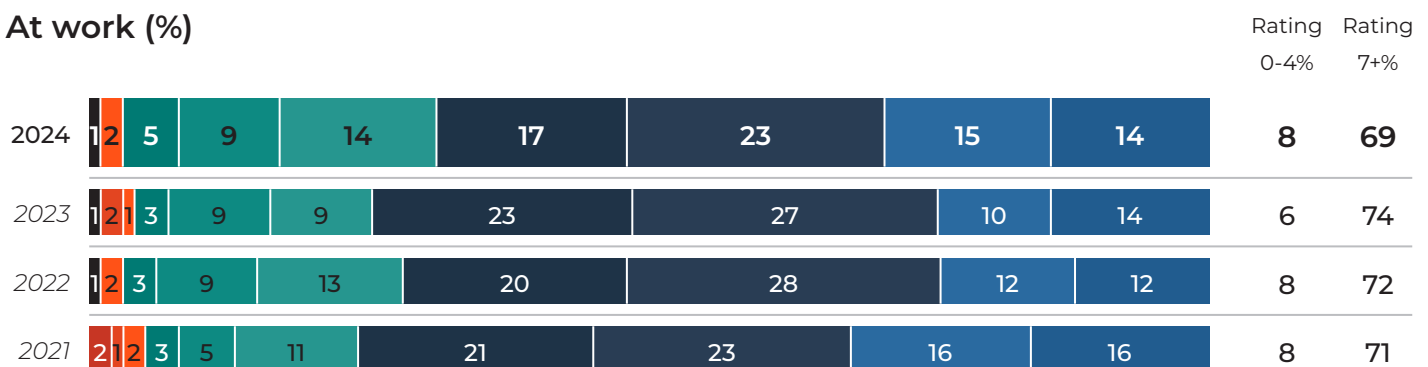
While somewhere between two thirds and three quarters of children and young people feel satisfied with the level of respect and acceptance they feel, a considerable proportion do not. Tertiary education has the highest satisfaction rating, while the local community continues to have the lowest. Slightly fewer young people felt satisfied with the level of respect and acceptance they experienced in the workplace this year.

The following charts measure children and young people's satisfaction with the level of respect they are treated with in...

At university/TAFE/college (%)

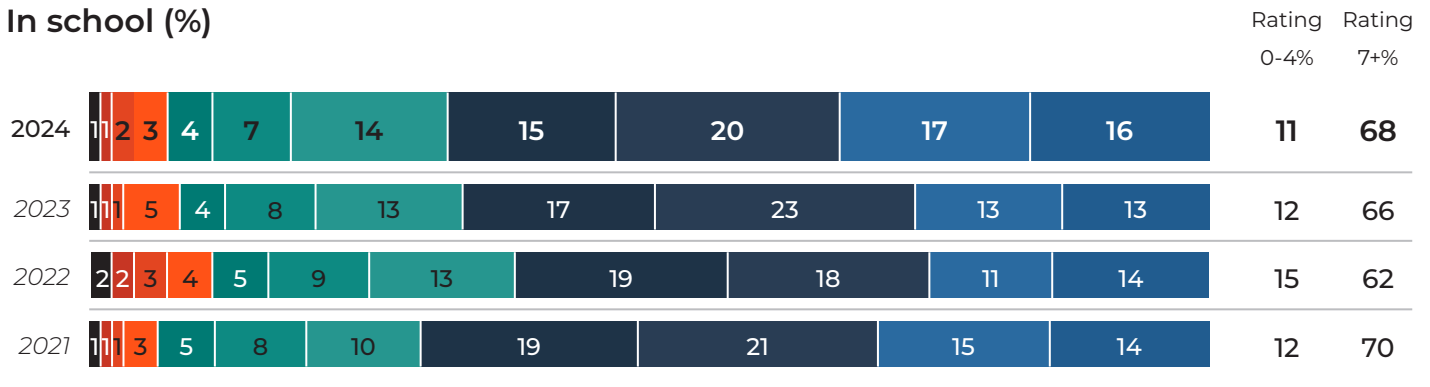


At work (%)

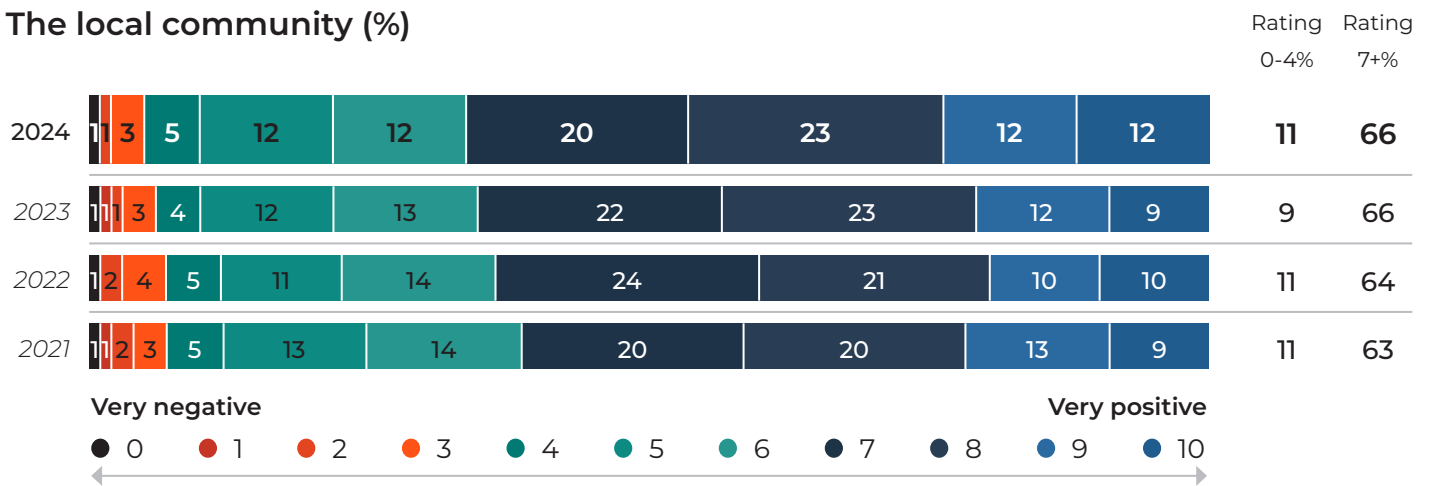




In school (%)



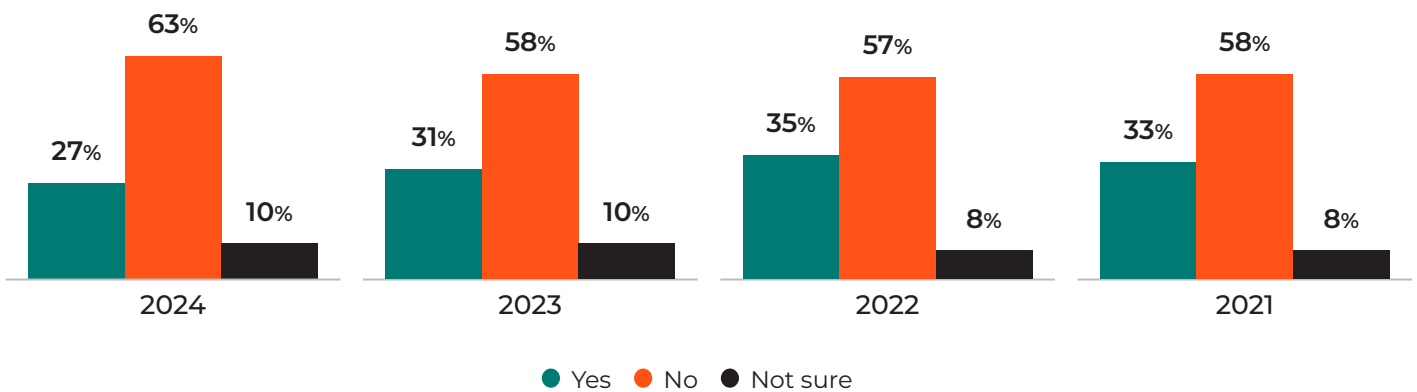
The local community (%)



Prevalence of discrimination

In 2024, the prevalence of discrimination has declined for the second year in a row, with around 1 in 4 (27%) children and young people reporting experiencing discrimination in the past year down from 1 in 3 in 2021.

Experienced discrimination in the last 12 months



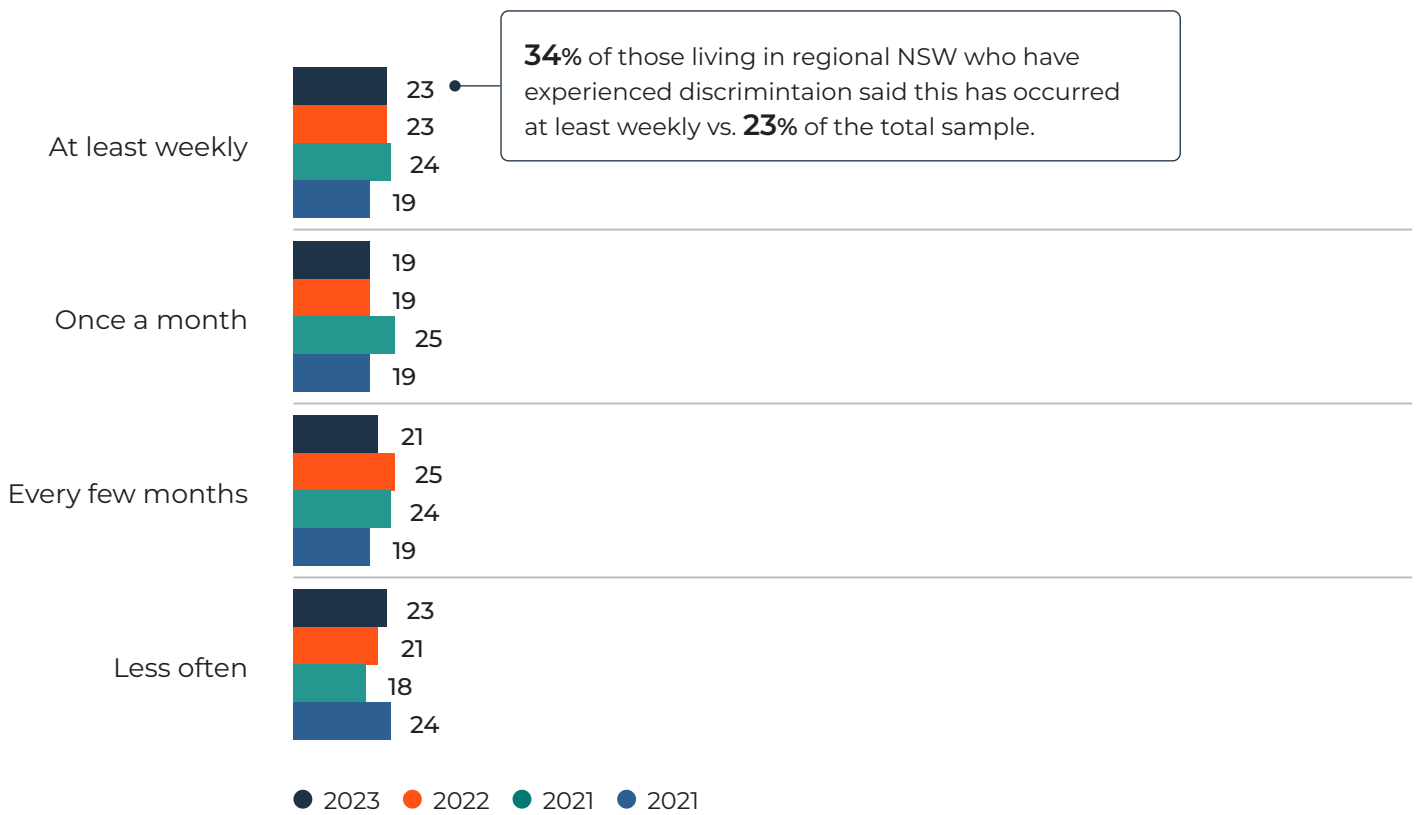
Q. The next question asks about respect and acceptance. How satisfied are you with...? Base: All participants (2024: n=1,010, 2023: n=1,017, 2022: 1,005, 2021: n=815), Tertiary students (2024: n=281, 2023: n=261, 2022: n=253, 2021: n=294), those who are working (2024: n=374, 2023: n=379, 2022: n=373, 2021: n=310), School students (2024: n=512, 2023: n=513, 2022: n=517, 2021: n=360)



Frequency of discrimination

Consistent with 2023 and 2022 results, around a quarter of those who had been discriminated against in the past 12 months, experienced it on a weekly basis. Unfortunately, this is more common among children and young people living in Regional NSW, as 34% reported experiencing discrimination on a weekly basis in compared to 17% in Metropolitan Sydney. Those most likely to have experienced discrimination in 2024 were those with a physical disability (57%), neurodivergent children and young people (51%), those with a mental illness (44%), Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people (42%), young parents (39%) and those who identify as LGBTQIA+ (39%).

Prevalence of discrimination amongst those who have experienced it in the last 12 months...



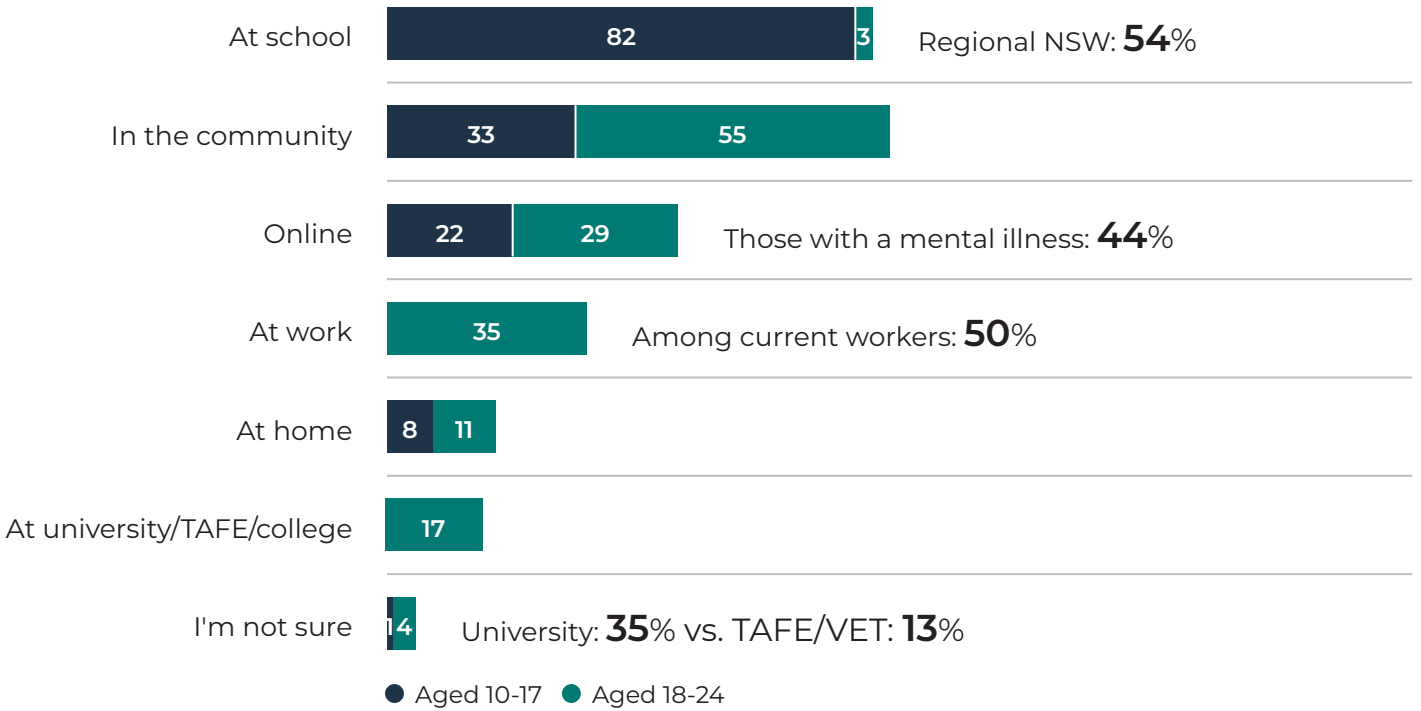
Q. Discrimination is when a person is treated differently (not in a good way) because of some aspect of their identity. In the last 12 months, do you feel that you have experienced discrimination or have been treated unfairly by others? Base: All participants who consented to answer questions on discrimination (2024: n=776, 2023: n=793, 2022: n=816, 2021: n=673)

Q. In the past 12 months, in which places or situations have you personally experienced discrimination or have been treated unfairly Base: Those who have experienced discrimination (2024: n=218, 2023: n=240, 2022: n=282, 2021: n=232)



In 2024, ethnicity and cultural background remains the most common reason for discrimination for the second year in a row and it has increased year on year since 2022, with 40% of children and young people who had experienced discrimination in 2024 saying it was related to their ethnic or cultural background. Among children and young people who speak a language other than English at home, 63% of those who experienced discrimination said it related to their ethnic or cultural background.

Where discrimination occurred – 2024 (%)



Q. Thinking about the discrimination you have experienced in the past 12 months, do you think it was because of any of the following?
Base: Those who have experienced discrimination (2024: n=218, 2023: n=240, 2022: n=282, 2021: n=145)

Q. In the past 12 months, in which places or situations have you experienced discrimination or have been treated unfairly?
Base: Those who have experienced discrimination (2024: n=218, 2023: n=240, 2022: n=282, 2021: n=232), *school students (2024: n=89, 2023: n=121, 2022: n=138, 2021: n=91), **those who are working (2024: n=99, 2023: n=90, 2022: n=117, 2021: n=106)

Advice to the NSW Government

When asked, unprompted, about how the NSW Government could improve life for people like them, children and young people gave a range of responses. In 2024, the top recommendations children and young people made to the NSW Government were to have better control over social media and help them become less dependent on technology, to help keep the community safe and to improve and increase support services available.

Top 15 recommendations – 2024	Top 15 recommendations – 2023
1. Have better control on social media and help reduce reliance on technology	Make the cost of living more affordable
2. Keep the community safe	Provide financial support / support for those in need
3. Improve and increase support services	Improve and increase support services
4. Provide educational support / more support for students at schools	Make housing and rent more affordable
5. Provide better laws and have better rules and regulation	Provide more recreational / entertainment facilities / playgrounds / parks
6. Provide financial support / support for those in need	Provide better mental health support / more access to mental health resources
7. Provide more recreational / entertainment facilities / playgrounds / parks	Provide more events / workshops / fun activities
8. Provide more events / workshops / fun activities	More funding for education / improve school facilities
9. Make the cost of living more affordable	Create more job opportunities for graduates / more career opportunities
10. Provide better mental health support / more access to mental health resources	Improve the education system / improve curriculum
11. Create more job opportunities for graduates / more career opportunities	Provide educational support / more support for students at schools
12. Make housing and rent more affordable	Focus more on bullying issues/provide educational programs on bullying
13. Focus more on bullying issues / provide educational programs on bullying	Provide better transportation services
14. More funding for education / improve school facilities	Provide support in relation to taking care of the environment / addressing climate change
15. Improve the education system / improve curriculum	Keep the community safe

Q. Thinking about everything that been covered in this survey, what would you like to see the NSW Government do to make life better for young people like yourself? Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017), a selection of coded responses (2022: n=513)

acyp.



**Office of the Advocate for
Children and Young People**

Report:

The NSW Strategic Plan for
Children and Young People:
Tracking Report 03

Date:

February 2025

Contact Us

Locked Bag 5000
Parramatta NSW 2124

ABN: 36 433 875 185

Phone: (02) 9248 0970

Email: acyp@acyp.nsw.gov.au

Website: acyp.nsw.gov.au