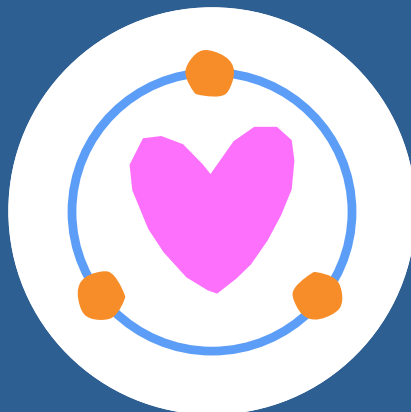


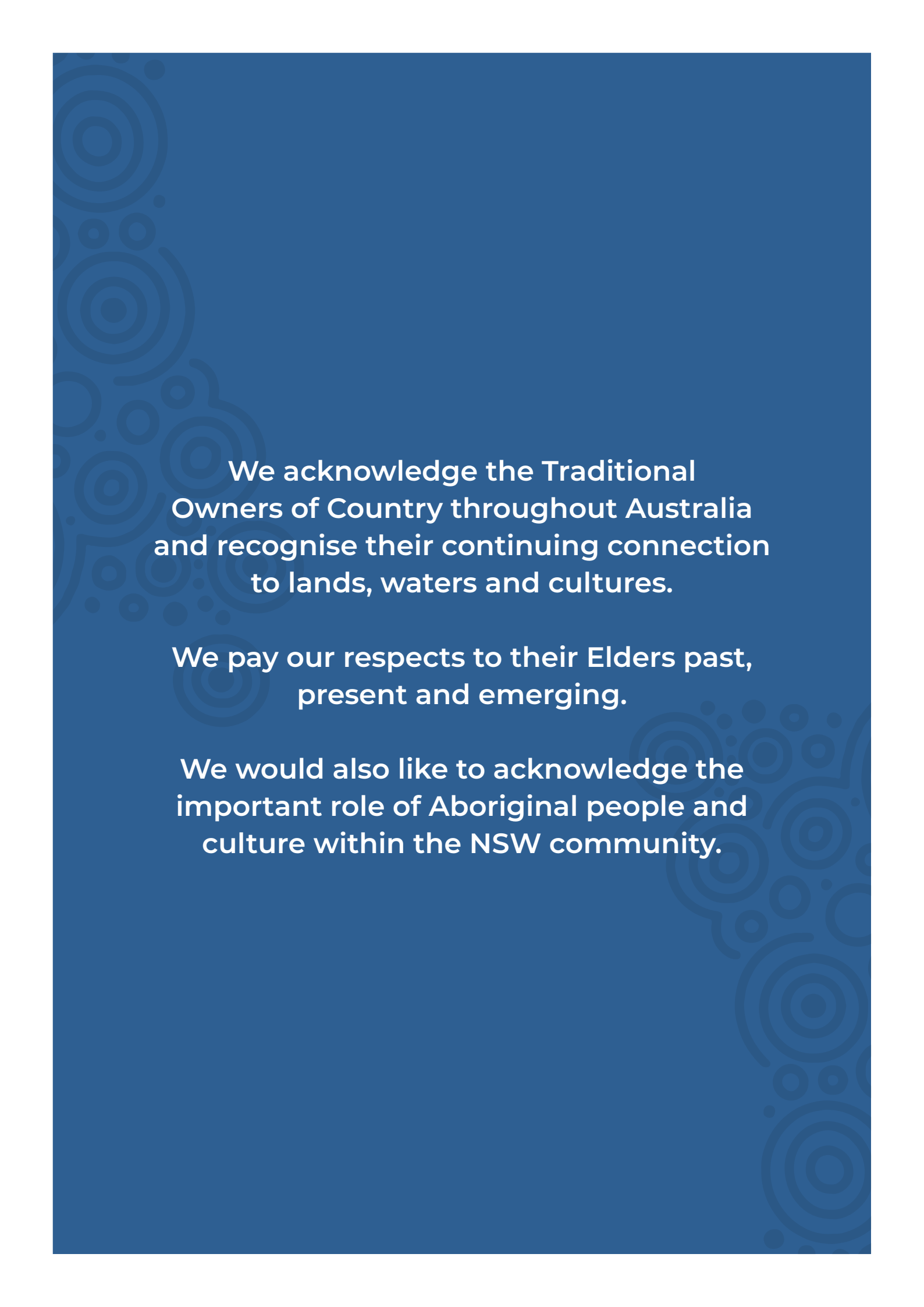
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Office of the Advocate for  
Children & Young People

## The NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People

Tracking Report  
02





**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, present and emerging.**

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

# Advocate's Foreword



This is the second tracking report for the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People*. This report focusses on our 2023 pillars: (i) A Good Standard of Living and (ii) Respect and Acceptance. ACYP has demonstrated, and advocated for, transparency when it comes to data. The children and young people who participate in our work want government, business and community to access this data and utilise it in policy, programs and advocacy. It is also important to call out when things are working and have improved in NSW and to highlight where we need to continue to support children and young people across the State.

Together with our *How children and young people are impacted by and responding to the rising cost of living in NSW (Final Consultation Report)* report, children and young people have called out the need for greater supports around cost of living, finances and mental wellbeing. We encourage the NSW Government and other services and agencies to hear those calls and focus on recommendations that ACYP, and other organisations like NCOSS, have provided. There is also a need to focus on and work with specific cohorts who are struggling.

Let's utilise where children and young people say things are working well, as ways that we can support them and their needs better. Those who participated in this work tell us that they have positive relationships with family and friends. Great! Then let's use those networks to support the areas where children and young people are struggling (mental health), and see a greater investment in a range of mental health supports including peer-to-peer mental health supports.

Children and young people are largely positive about life, which has increased from 2022, and they are hopeful about their futures. This is heartening and as a result, we are doing things well and need to keep working with and understanding how we can continue to see improvements in wellbeing, happiness and hope for the future.

As always, in their own words, children and young people have provided ideas as to how we can help them and design our work and policies better. Recognising that what they have suggested in this report is similar to what children and young people have suggested in other work we have done over a number of years, we all need to work harder to see that change is implemented and ensure it's acted upon. Curriculum reform and the ask for more job opportunities is something we can do across government and community, and I want to acknowledge the ongoing work of NESAs with our Youth Advisory Council around curriculum reform. Transport and access to services has been an issue for a number of years, and we acknowledge the ongoing work of many government agencies and non-government agencies in designing policy and programs that support this ask.

I want to acknowledge the good work that has been highlighted throughout this report. The work of Youth Foyers and Children's Parliament. Both have placed children and young people at the heart of their service design and program.

Our last report will focus on Love, Connection and Safety and Hope for the Future. Each of the six pillars in the Strategic Plan are significant and important, not only because it represents the words of children and young people and what they want, but because if we do all of them well, this aims to deliver on all of their hopes for the future.

Thank you to the team for all this work and to SEC Newgate for their support. Let's work together to ensure that we see happiness and hope(s) improve always, and that NSW is the best place for all our children and young people to live.



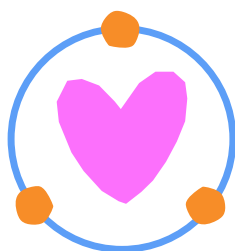
**Zöe Robinson**  
**Advocate for Children and Young People**

# 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 tracking report outlines the key findings from our most recent 2023 survey and compares these with the 2021 benchmark and 2022 results, which were included in the Strategic Plan and Strategic Plan Tracking Report 01.

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.

In a few small instances we have also chosen to highlight results which are not statistically significant, these are noted in a footnote.

ACYP has committed to focus on two of the key commitment areas of the Strategic Plan each year. In 2023 the areas of focus were 'A Good Standard of Living' and 'Respect and Acceptance'. 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 and 2023 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
Sample size	n=815	n=1,005	n=1,017
Margin of error at 95% confidence interval	+/-3.4%	+/-3.1%	+/-3.1%
Fieldwork period	22 <sup>nd</sup> July to 10 <sup>th</sup> August	16 <sup>th</sup> September to 4 <sup>th</sup> October	23 <sup>rd</sup> August to 13 <sup>th</sup> September

ACYP acknowledges the limitations of this survey, in that it does not capture the views of younger children or children with lower literacy skills. However, ACYP has sought to ensure groups experiencing additional vulnerability were captured by the survey by circulating it to the relevant agencies in addition to research panels. ACYP also conducted analysis to understand how these groups were impacted in varying ways.

ACYP partnered with 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 2023 Youth Week survey. In these instances, the survey source has been identified beneath the relevant chart.

# Key Findings

Overall, in 2023 most key measures indicate improvement over the last 12 months, with children and young people across NSW reporting largely positive scores across the six core commitment areas of the Strategic Plan. However, in 2023 there remained a number of key areas of concern for children and young people including rising cost of living and mental health and wellbeing.

The area with the most positive scores relates to children and young people's rating of their relationships with family and friends. In 2023, children and young people reported the most negative scores in relation to their mental health, and the level of respect they feel in their community.

The issue of most concern in 2023 to children and young people was in regard to the high cost of living. The areas of greatest improvement over the past 12 months have been in children and young people's rating of their physical health and their feelings about life as a whole. The measure with the largest decline over the previous year has been children and young people's financial status. Another key issue to monitor is mental health, as it was the second unprompted issues in NSW for children and young people after high cost of living.

## ■ *Areas indicating improvement*

Despite the challenges of recent years – the current cost of living crisis, bushfires and floods – children and young people are the most positive they have been about their life as a whole in the last three years. When asked to rate how they felt about their life as a whole, 72% provided a positive rating of 7 or more out of 10 - a significant increase from 65% in 2022. Ratings of happiness are still positive, with 66% rating their current happiness positively as a 7 or more out of 10 at the time of the survey.

In the past 12 months there have been positive increases across all metrics of children and young people's quality of relationships. Children and young people's rating of positive relationships with family has increased (83% rating a positive 7 or more out of 10 up from 80% in 2022), and ratings for positive relationships with friends has increased (78% rating this positively a 7 or more out of 10, up from 76% in 2022).

Children and young people also said they feel safe in public situations. In 2023, those saying they feel safe in public areas in the community has increased (70% rating this positively a 7 or more out of 10, up from 67% in 2022). It is also important to note that children and young people are feeling safer at school now, with those giving this a positive rating (7 or more out of 10) at 80% up from 76% in 2022. Although children and young people with a mental illness were most likely to feel unsafe at school and in public situations, this cohort has consistently been the most likely to feel unsafe. There has also been an increased number of children and young people reporting that they feel respected in the community, with those rating this positively as a 7 or more out of 10 which is at 66% up from 64% in 2022.



Across NSW, children and young people continue to feel positive about their hope(s) for the future, with 70% rating this positive as a 7 or more out of 10, those most likely to feel hopeful about their future were children and young people ages 10-17 (76% rating this positive as a 7 or more out of 10). Children and young people also remained hopeful about getting the education and training they need, with 75% rating this a positive 7 or more out of 10. The cohort most likely to feel hopeful about the education and training they need were males aged 10-17 (83%, rating this at 7 or more out of 10).

### ■ **Areas to monitor**

In 2023, high cost of living was the number one issue highlighted by children and young people in NSW with 35% mentioning it unprompted, up from 8% in 2021. In addition, children and young people indicating that they had some or a lot of financial difficulty increased at 35% compared to 32% in 2022. Those most likely to have financial difficulty were neurodiverse children and young people (61%), those with a disability (57%) and those with a mental illness (52%). Fear, stress, or uncertainty for the future were also listed in the top 10 unprompted issues for children and young people in NSW, being the first time this has been mentioned in the top 10 unprompted issues.

Mental health and emotional wellbeing remains a key area to monitor, as it was identified by children and young people in NSW as being the second highest area of concern, with just over one in five (22%) mentioning it, unprompted, as an issue of concern. However, this is down 10% from 2022, when nearly a third (32%) mentioned it as being a key issue. Mental health and wellbeing may be seen as the second rather than the first priority issue for children and young people due to the issue of high cost of living. Ratings of anxiety have also improved slightly over the past year, with less children and young people giving a poor rating of their current levels of anxiety (those rating a negative 0 to 4 out of 10 dropped from 50% in 2022 to 46% in 2023).

There are still high numbers of children and young people experiencing anxiety and this remains an area of concern. Also, children and young people's rating for stress in relation to study has worsened over the past year, with those rating a lot or moderate amounts of study-related stress increasing from 63% in 2022 to 66% in 2023.

Although the children and young people of NSW were positive overall about their hope for the future, those who had experienced the youth justice system were less likely to feel hopeful for their future (30% rating this negatively 0 to 4 out of 10), which represents a 10% increase for this cohort since 2022. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people were less likely to feel hopeful in their ability to get the education and training they need (20% rating this negatively 0 to 4 out of 10 compared to 7% in 2022). This is a 13% increase in those who do not feel hopeful, which is a concern.

One in three children and young people (31%) reported experiencing discrimination in the past 12 months in 2023, consistent with the previous year. Disturbingly, in 2023 almost a quarter (23%) of those who have been discriminated against in the past 12 months experienced this on a weekly basis. Those mostly likely to experience discrimination were neurodiverse children and young people (71%), young parents (59%), those with a disability (50%), and those who identify as LGBTQIA+ (49%). Experiences of discrimination in school have decreased among those aged 10-17 from 84% (2022) to 77% in 2023. Although this still remains high, discrimination has also increased at university/ TAFE/ college for those aged 18-24 from 11% (2022) to 15% in 2023.

Overall, children and young people were satisfied with the local availability of fun activities, but there have been slight decreases in satisfaction across most metrics. Those providing a positive rating for their ability to participate in fun activities (69% rating positively 7 or more out of 10), is down from 71% in 2022. Those providing a positive rating (7 or more out of 10) for having a variety of fun activities available locally, has decreased from 55% in 2022 to 52% in 2023.



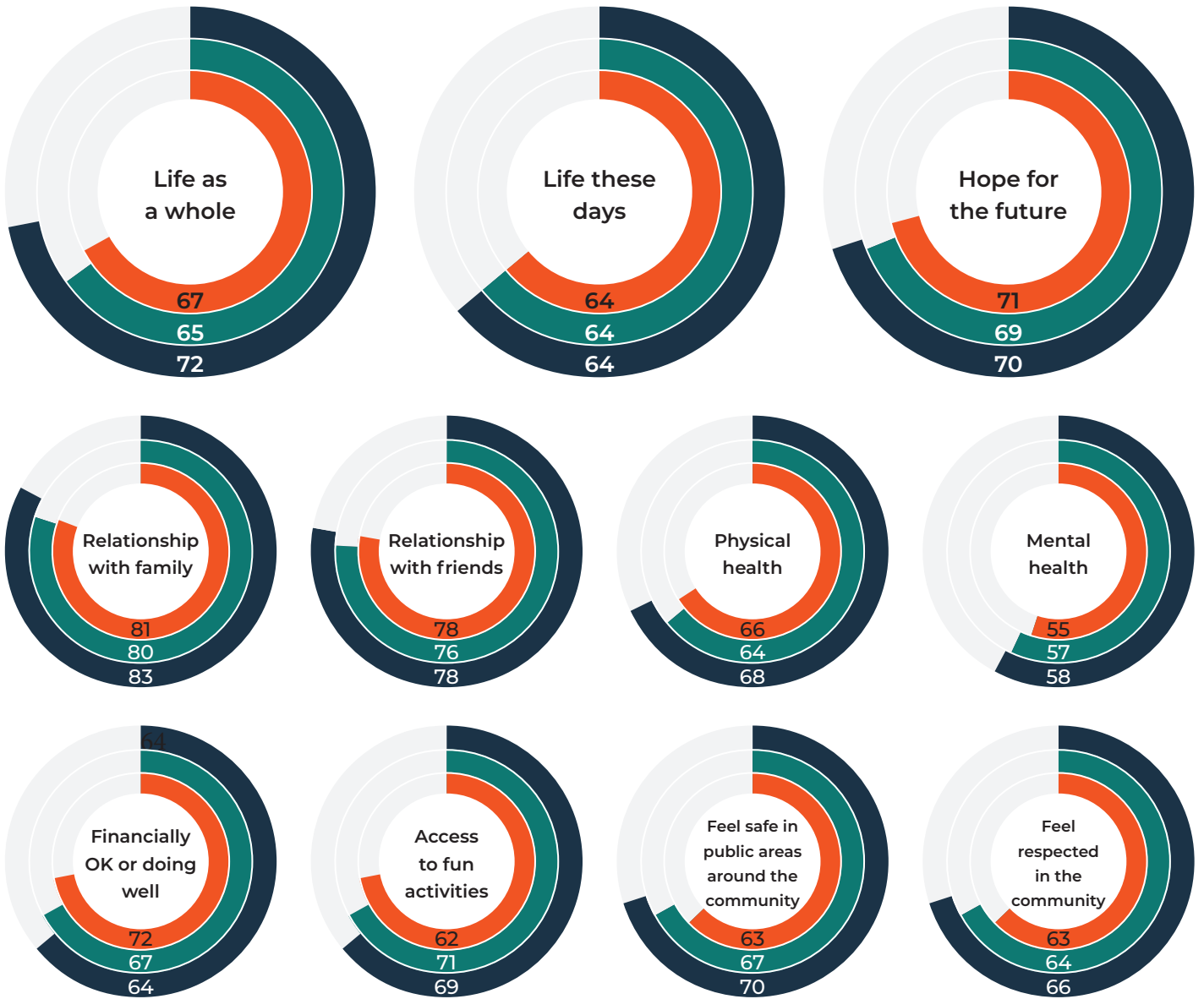
## ■ **Key principles and advice for government**

Each year ACYP asks three questions around voice, rights and access to see if children and young people agree or disagree. In this report, children and young people are agreeing less that government programs and initiatives are accessible to them at 42%, which is a 6% drop over the past 12 months (48% in 2022). Those who agree that the government considers their rights is at 32%, this is a 4% drop over the past 12 months (36% in 2022). Those who agree that the government listens to people their age is at 21%, a 2% drop over the past 12 months (23% in 2022).

When asked what the NSW Government could do to make life better for children and young people, the most responses were in relation to making the cost of living more affordable, providing more financial support for those in need and providing better support services.

# Findings snapshot

% rating 7+/10 ● 2023 ● 2022 ● 2021



## Principles of the Strategic Plan

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

Strongly + somewhat disagree %      Strongly + somewhat agree %

Statement	Year	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Strongly + somewhat disagree %	Strongly + somewhat agree %
Listens to people your age and considers their opinions when making decisions	2023	18	31	29	17	3	50	21
	2022	21	29	26	19	4	50	23
Thinks about the rights of people your age in decisions that impact you	2023	13	27	28	25	6	40	32
	2022	11	25	28	28	8	36	36
Makes programs or initiatives accessible for people like you	2023	10	20	28	35	7	30	42
	2022	7	18	28	35	13	25	48

● Strongly disagree ● Somewhat disagree ● Neither ● Somewhat agree ● Strongly agree

## What matters to children and young people

The main issues children and young people said they faced in 2023 were in relation to:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
|  01. High costs of living                    |  06. Bullying  |
|  02. Mental health and emotional wellbeing   |  07. Social wellbeing and quality of life              |
|  03. Education and school                    |  08. Pressure to meet societal expectations and trends |
|  04. Expensive and insecure housing and rent |  09. Social media                                      |
|  05. Unemployment and access to jobs       |  10. Fear, stress or uncertainty for the future      |



*Everything [is] becoming expensive, usually [we] are forced to decide between paying the rent and avoiding homelessness or paying for necessities like food and medication.*

*Mental health issues. I feel that we can feel pretty lonely and hopeless, and do not know where to reach out or seek for help.*

*They are facing housing issues, rent being extremely expensive and having to work 3 jobs just for minimum wage.*

*School is very difficult for young students and makes it really hard for them to concentrate under all the pressure.*

*I think they [children and young people] feel the need to belong to a group or identify as something, rather than just travelling their own path. Peer pressure and social media pressures us big.*



*Address the rental and housing crisis.*

*Provide a platform for young people's voices to be heard as well as having a place for young people in government or an advisory board of young people.*

*"Improve the lives of young people include investing in quality education, promoting job creation and skill development, enhancing mental health support services, and implementing affordable housing initiatives.*

*Provide more benefits for younger people, make seeking help or getting help for mental health easier, making public transport free for students trying to afford everything is hard.*

*Better initiatives to support us financially. It is difficult with the cost of living to see a bright future.*



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

- 1 Make the cost of living more affordable
- 2 Provide financial support for young people and those in need
- 3 Provide more accessible resources and better support services
- 4 Increase affordability of housing
- 5 Provide more recreational, entertainment facilities, playgrounds and parks
- 6 Provide better mental health support and more access to mental health resources
- 7 Provide more events, workshops and fun activities
- 8 More funding for education and improve school facilities
- 9 Create more job opportunities for graduates/more career opportunities
- 10 Improve the education system/curriculum/have more educational programs
- 11 Provide educational support/provide more support for students at schools
- 12 Focus more on bullying issues, provide more educational programs
- 13 Provide better transportation services
- 14 Provide support in taking care of the environment/address climate change
- 15 Keeping the community safe

## In the voices of children and young people



*Cost of living, particularly in Sydney is very expensive. It's very hard to balance working enough to afford living and also balancing university.*

*When consulting about strategies in relation to young people, the government should be properly consulting with young people for them.*

*No one hires people with no experience, and it costs money to get experience.*

*I believe that mental health is one of the main issues that young people in NSW are facing today. With ever growing technology, there have not been as many needed advancements in the mental health industry.*

*I think there could be more recreational facilities that are more open for the public. Currently if I want to hang out with my friends, I have to worry about having enough spare pocket money to go to, for example, the cinemas or eating out.*

*Work with Federal Government to solve housing problems.*

*Better quality schooling for everyone even if they are not rich, and bullying needs to stop. I hate school because of the bullies.*

*I wish there was more acceptance of individuality within society, especially at school as they are trying to limit as much individuality as possible, restricting people to find themselves so we have to act in a uniform and similar way when we are in fact not all the same.*

*Make more information accessible in high school, things about consent, how to do your taxes, health, and safety.*

*I would like to see more discussion and openness about mental health as well as more recognition surrounding the stress of schooling in today's society.*

*Lack of connection to community, self-esteem issues from seeing only the best of people's lives from the internet.*



# 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

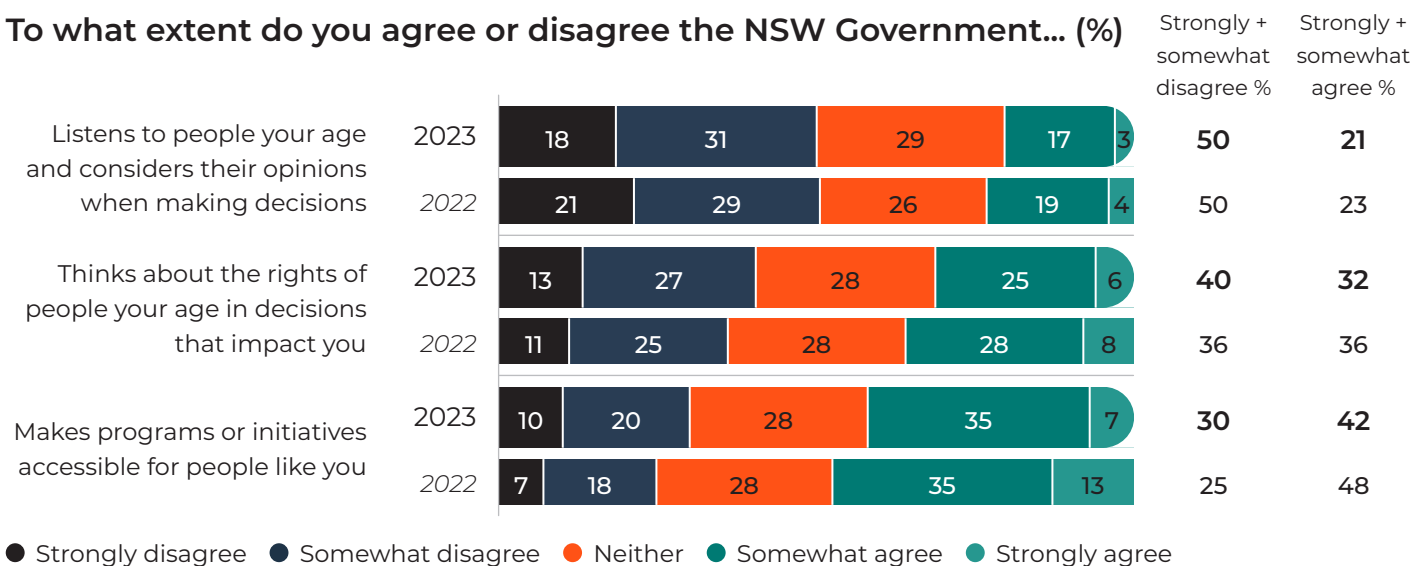
Are children and young people able to access this initiative or program?

ACYP's 2023 Youth Week survey asked children and young people to rate the NSW Government on its performance against these three principles. It is important to note that the 2023 Youth Week survey fieldwork took place during the 2023 state election.

The NSW Government's performance against all three principles declined slightly in comparison to the 2022 Youth Week survey results.

In 2023, just under half of the children and young people agreed that NSW Government programs and initiatives are accessible to them, just under a third felt their rights were considered, and less than a quarter felt their voices and opinions were heard.

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



Q. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the NSW Government...?

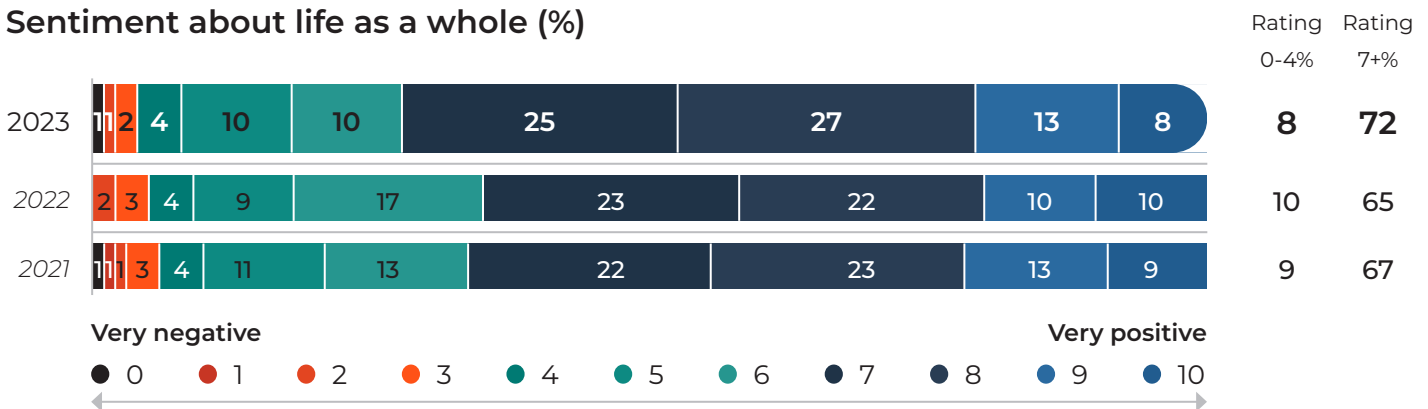
Source: ACYP Youth Week 2023, Survey Base, 2023 (n=1,007), 2022 (n=1,000) Children and Young People. Fieldwork period ran from 8–17 April 2023.

Compared to the 2022 Youth Week Survey results, there was a slight decline in the percentage of children and young people who agree that the NSW Government listens to their voices and opinions, with only 1 in 5 (21%) agreeing and half (50%) saying they do not feel that the NSW Government listens to their voices and opinions. Since 2022, there has been an increase in the number of people who disagree with the statement that the NSW Government programs and initiatives are accessible to them (30% in 2023 vs 25% in 2022), and felt their rights were considered (40%). There are several cohorts who are statistically more likely to feel that the NSW Government is failing to consider them across these two metrics<sup>1</sup> including: those who have experienced financial difficulty; LGBTQIA+ young people, those with a disability, and those with a mental illness.

## Sentiment about life

In the 2021 benchmark and 2022 and 2023 tracking surveys, children and young people were asked to rate their feelings about both life as a whole and life these days. The first question allows us to understand how children and young people are feeling about life generally, taking a longer view, whilst the second question allows us to understand how they feel their life is going at the point in time of the survey.

### Sentiment about life as a whole (%)



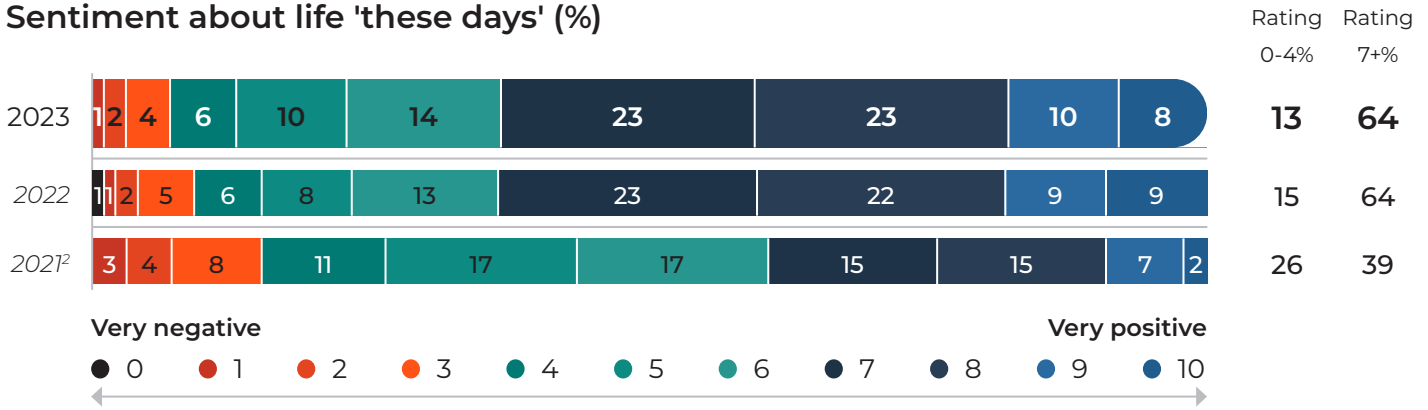
Despite the challenges of recent years – the current cost of living crisis, bushfires and floods – young people are the most positive they have been about their life as a whole in the last three years. However, sentiment about life these days is relatively unchanged from 2022, suggesting there continues to be challenges for children and young people in their day-to-day lives.

Q How do you feel about your life as a whole? Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)

<sup>1</sup> There was only an increase in two of the three metrics, so only the cohorts that are more likely to disagree with these two metrics have been listed.

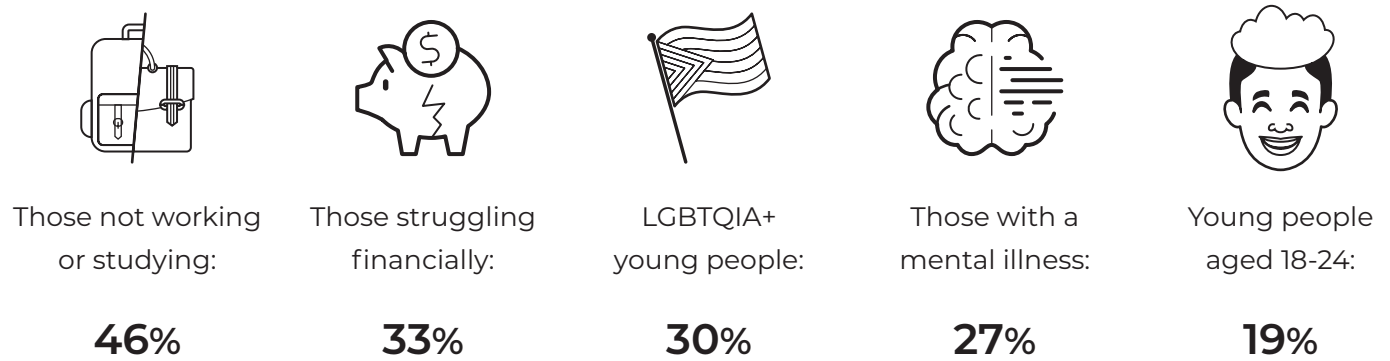


## Sentiment about life 'these days' (%)



While children and young people’s perceptions of life as a whole have remained fairly steady and optimistic – since the benchmark survey, their sentiment about life ‘these days’ has improved considerably since that question was first asked during the 2021 COVID-19 lockdown in NSW, indicating both the impact lockdowns had on children and young people at the time, and their improvement since then.

## Those more likely to feel negative about life 'these days' in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



Q And how do you feel about your life these days? Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)

<sup>2</sup> 2021 data was drawn from Wave 2 of the COVID-19 tracking study. Base n=402 young people aged 12-24 years. Fieldwork ran 30th August – 2nd 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 two years are shown below.

Finances, mental health, and education remain dominant concerns for children and young people across NSW. Fear and uncertainty for the future has become an issue for the children and young people of NSW.

	Top 10 issues 2023	Top 10 issues 2022
1.	35% Financial instability and high cost of living	32% Mental health and emotional wellbeing (anxiety, stress, depression, etc.)
2.	22% Mental health and emotional wellbeing (anxiety, stress, depression, etc.)	26% Financial instability and high cost of living
3.	18% Education, school or home-schooling	15% Pressure to meet societal expectations or trends
4.	16% Expensive and insecure housing	14% Social wellbeing or quality of life
5.	13% Unemployment and access to jobs	13% Affordable housing
6.	12% Bullying	13% Education, school or home-schooling
7.	11% Social wellbeing or quality of life	12% Bullying
8.	10% Pressure to meet societal expectations or trends	11% Social media
9.	9% Social media	10% Unemployment or access to jobs
10.	9% Fear, stress or uncertainty for the future	7% Drug and alcohol abuse



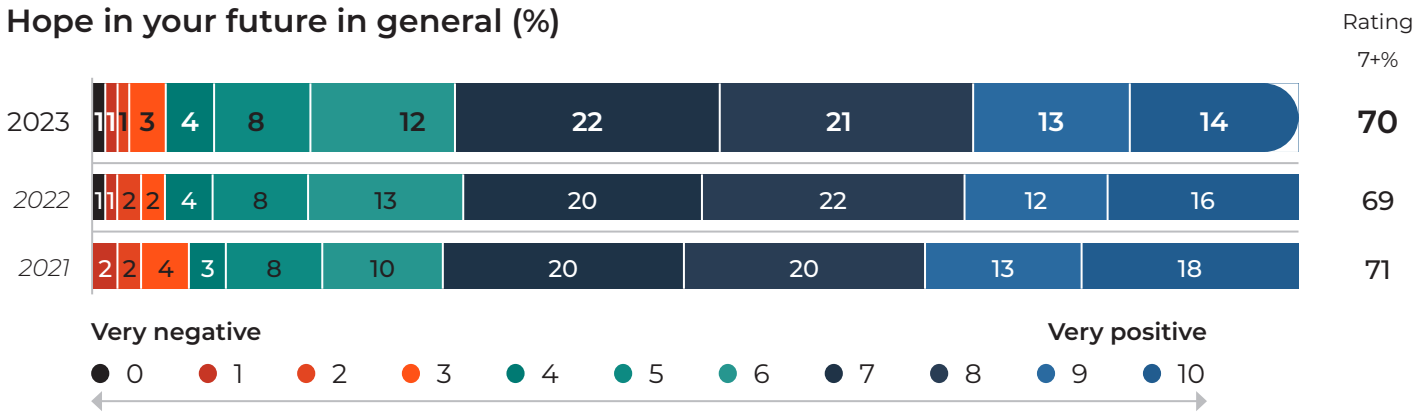
# 01. Hope for the Future

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.

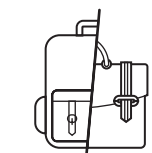
Most children and young people across NSW are hopeful about their future, with there being a slight increase across all three metrics since 2022. Only children and young people's hope in their ability to get the education and training they need to achieve their goals, is higher than the original data from 2021. In 2023, children and young people felt hopeful about their ability to get the education and training they needed, though finding a job in a field they are interested in felt less achievable.

However, some groups are noticeably less hopeful when compared to 2022, including those who have had contact with the justice system (20% increase from 2020), Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people showing a 10% increase in expressing less hope in their ability to get the education and training they need. Neurodiverse children and young people felt less hopeful in this area.

## Hope in your future in general (%)



## Those less likely to feel hopeful in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



Those not working or studying:

42%



Those who've had contact with the justice system:

30%



Neurodiverse children and young people:

26%



Those with mental illness:

21%



Those struggling financially:

21%

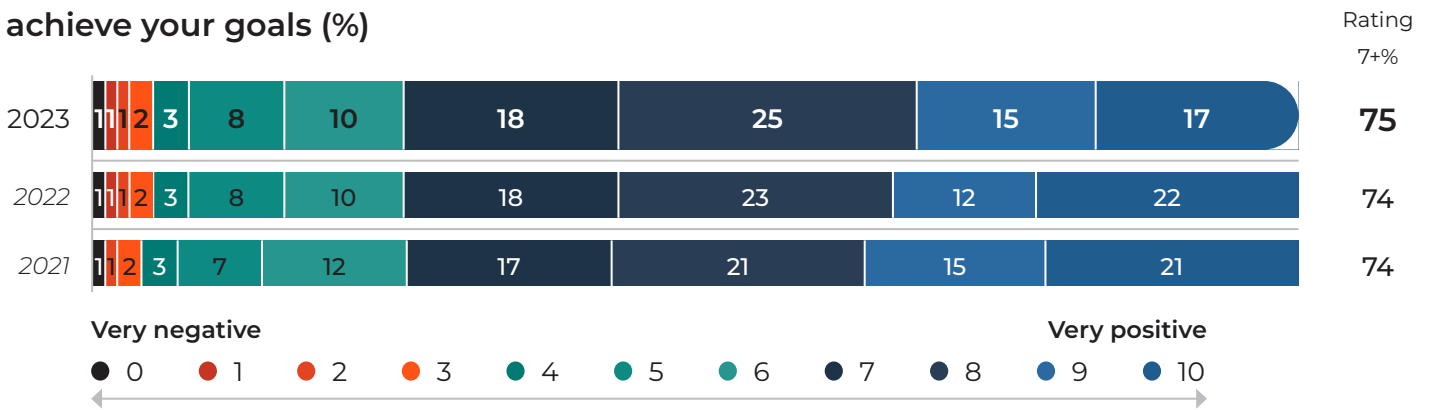


Those with a disability:

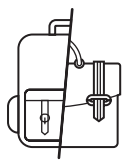
19%



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



### Those less likely to feel hopeful in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



Those not working or studying:

30%



Neurodiverse children and young people:

27%



ATSI children and young people:

20%



Those with mental illness:

18%



Those with a disability:

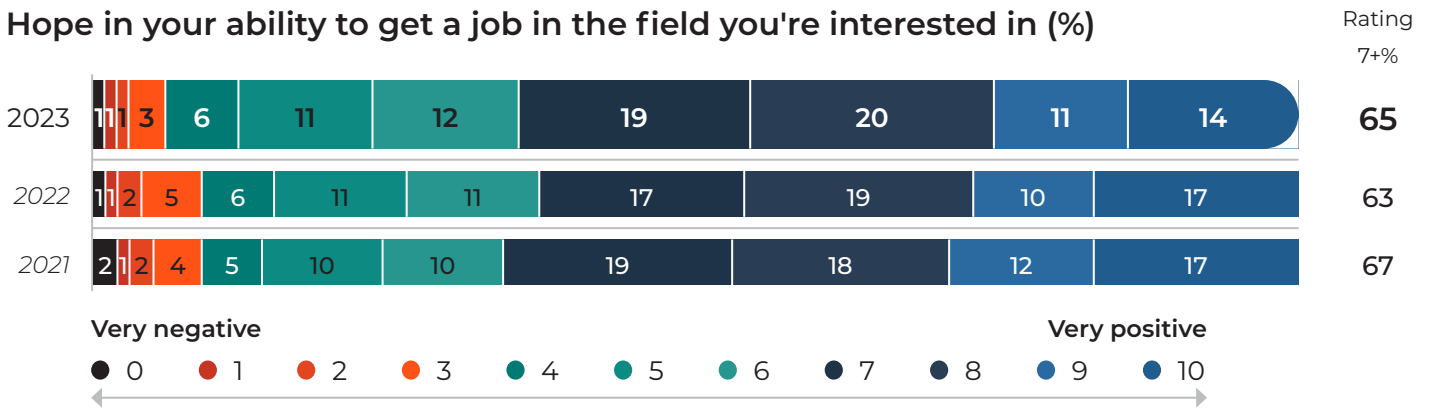
18%



LGBTQIA+ children and young people:

18%

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



### Those less likely to feel hopeful in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



Neurodiverse children and young people:

32%



Those struggling financially:

30%



Those with mental illness:

24%



LGBTQIA+ children and young people:

24%



Young people aged 18-24:

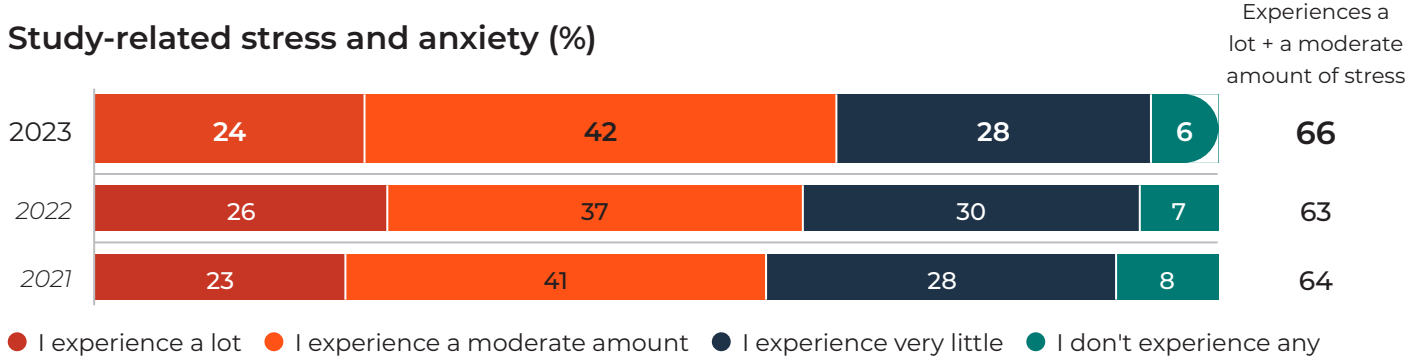
17%

Q How hopeful do you feel about...? Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)

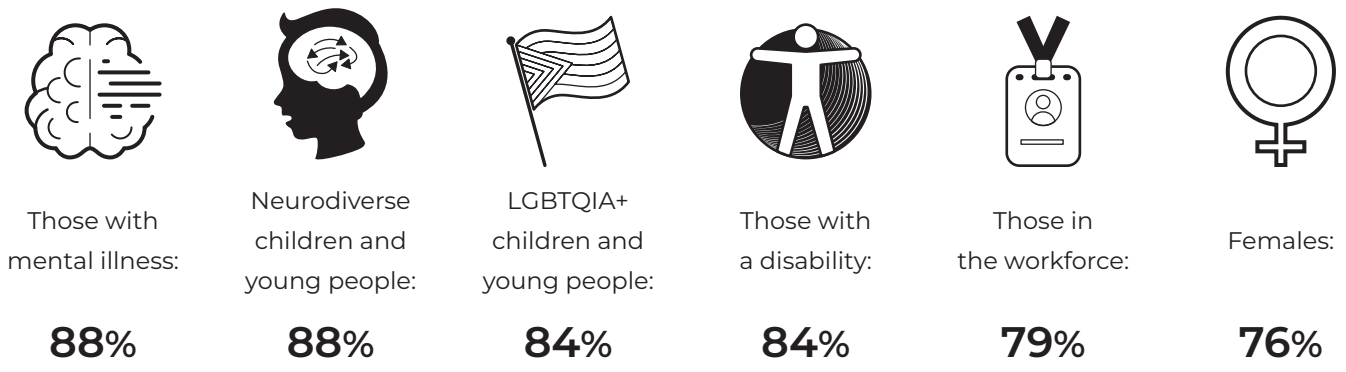


# Study-related stress and anxiety

Among current school students, levels of study-related stress and anxiety have increased slightly from last year's tracking report survey and remain at a high level with two-thirds experiencing at least a moderate level of anxiety.



## Those more likely to feel a lot or a moderate amount of study-related stress or anxiety in 2023



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



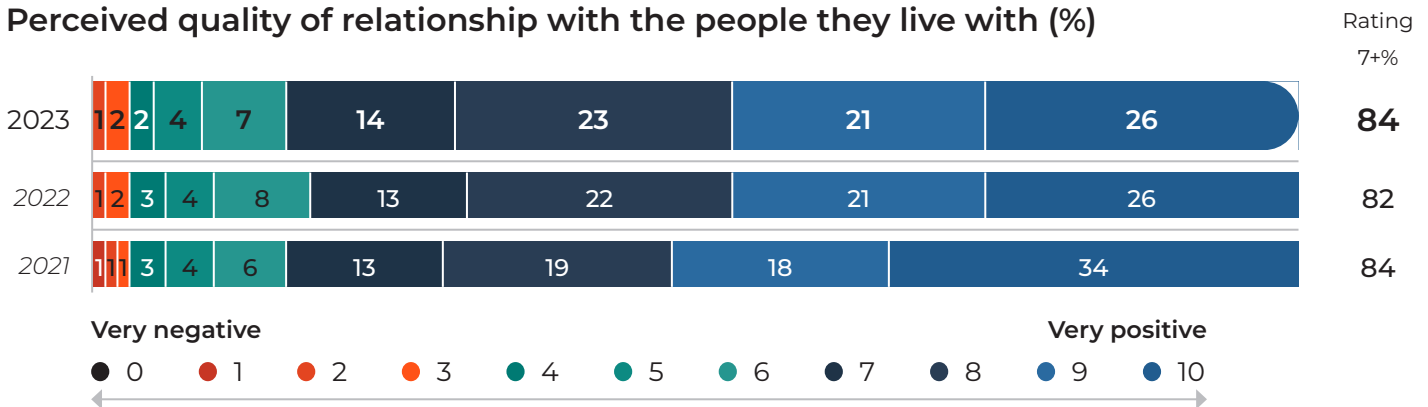
## 02. Love, Connection and Safety

Children and young people feel safe, loved and nurtured. They can connect and build friendships with others. They feel that they belong to a wider community, social or cultural group. They are free from neglect, abuse and violence.

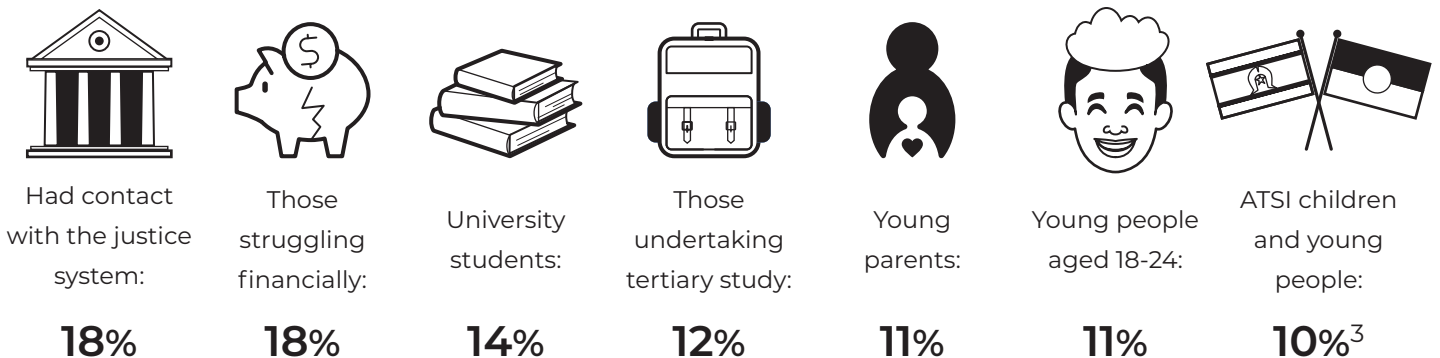
### Quality of relationships

The quality of relationships across all four measured areas has remained stable since 2021. Children and young people rated the quality of their relationships with the people they live with and their immediate family as mostly positive, closely followed by their friends. While most felt positive about the relationships they have with others in their community, those who were struggling financially, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people and young parents were more likely to rate their relationships as poor (0-4/10).

#### Perceived quality of relationship with the people they live with (%)



#### Those more likely to report poor relationships with those they live with in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



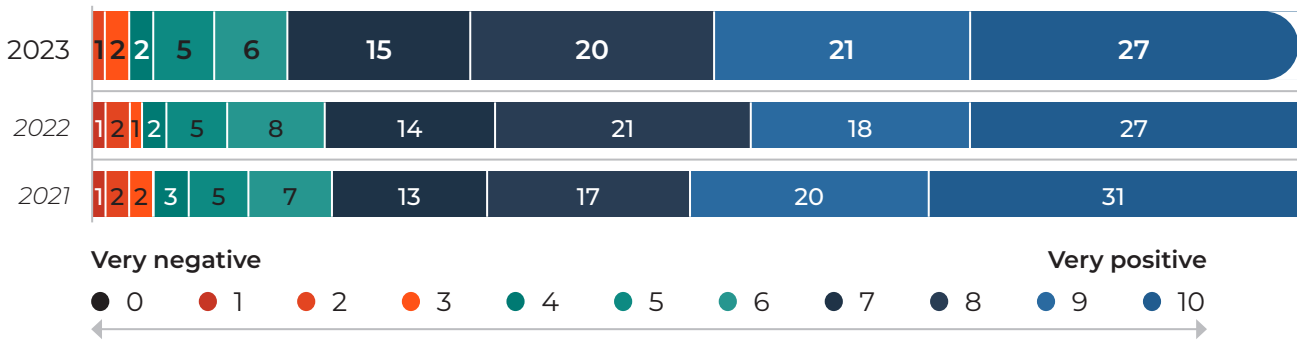
<sup>3</sup> Not highlighted as statistically significant.





### Perceived quality of relationship with their immediate family (%)

Rating  
7+%



### Those more likely to report poor relationships with their immediate family in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



Young parents:

22%



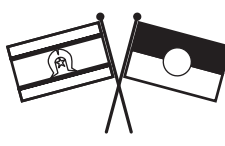
Those struggling financially:

16%



Neurodiverse children and young people:

15%



ATSI children and young people:

14%



Those who've had contact with the justice system:

13%

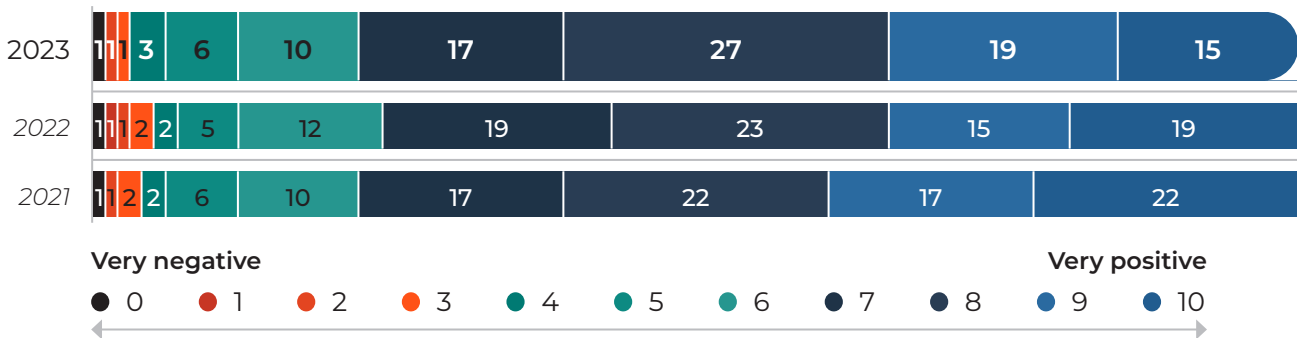


Those with a disability:

13%

### Perceived quality of relationship with their friends (%)

Rating  
7+%



### Those more likely to report poor relationships with their friends in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



Young parents:

26%



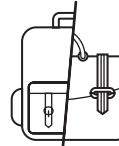
TAFE/VET students:

22%



Those struggling financially:

19%



Those not working or studying:

18%



Those with mental illness:

11%



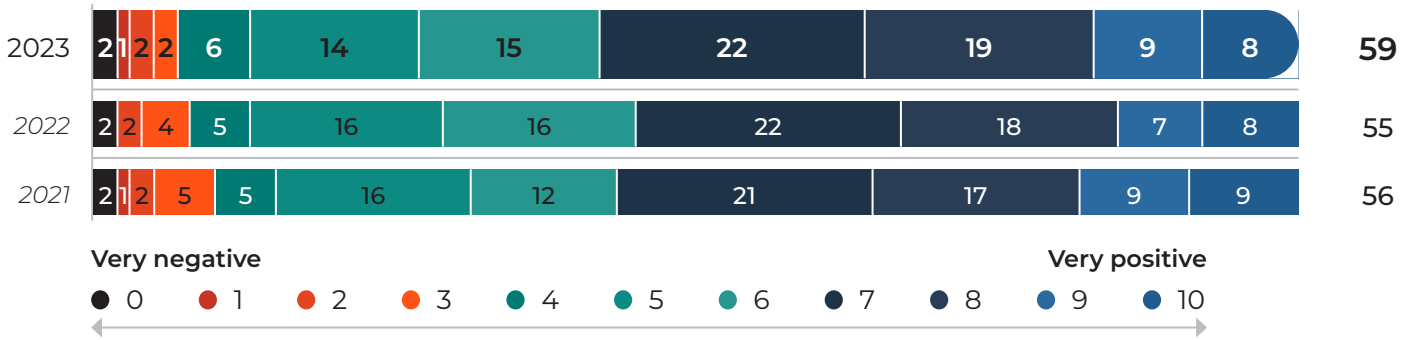
Young people aged 18-24:

10%



### Perceived quality of relationship with others in their community (%)

Rating 7+%



### Those more likely to report poor relationships with others in their community in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



Those struggling financially:

29%



Neurodiverse children and young people:

23%



Those with disability:

21%



Those with mental illness:

20%



Young people aged 18-24:

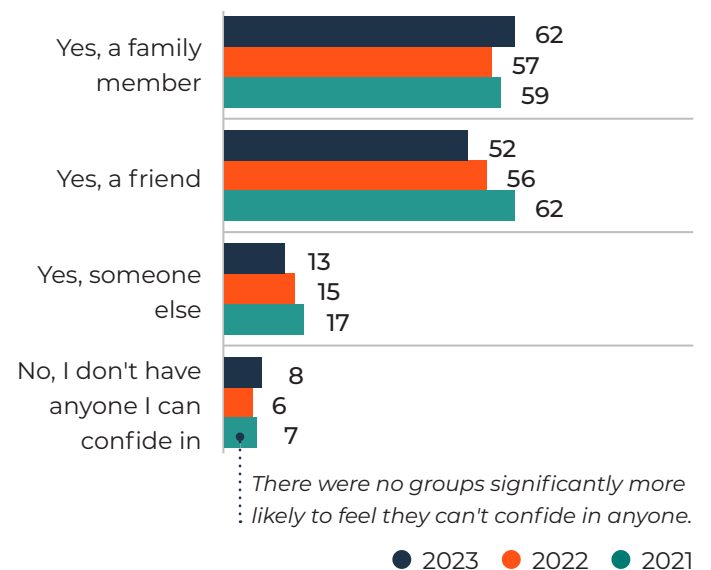
18%

### Someone to confide in

In 2023, the majority (92%) of children and young people felt they could confide in someone. While this is a slight decrease from 2022 (94%), it is positive to see that most children and young people have trusted people in their lives. However, we note that the number of children and young people who felt they could confide in a friend has again decreased to 52%, falling 10% since 2021 (62%).

Those most likely to say they had no-one to confide in were those who identified as LGBTQIA+ (13%) and those having difficulty making ends meet (13%).

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



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 (2023: n=1,017, 2022: 1,005, 2021: n=815), \*participants who don't live alone (2023: n=963, 2022: n=966, 2021: n=764)

Q. Do you have someone – either a friend, family member or someone else – who you feel you can confide in?

Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)

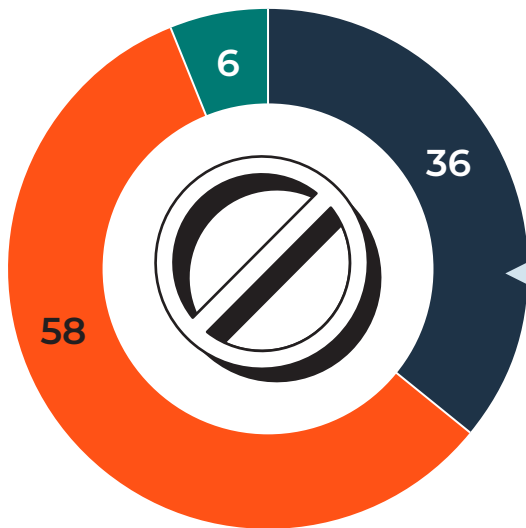


# Experiences of bullying

## Prevalence

In 2023, 36% of children and young people had experienced bullying in the past 12 months. While this is a slight decrease from the 2022 figures (39%), it is still a significant number with more than one in three children and young people being impacted. The experience of bullying is much more prevalent among certain cohorts – such as neurodiverse children and young people, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people, those with a disability, those with a mental illness, younger aged children, and young people living in regional areas. Over 50% of children and young people in those groups reported experiencing bullying.

Experienced bullying in the last 12 months (%)

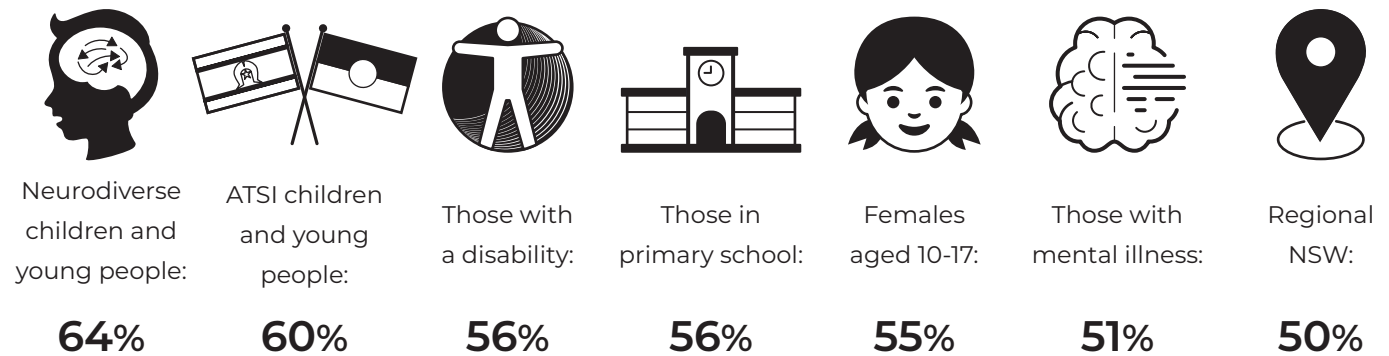


In 2022, 39% of children and young people indicated they had experienced bullying in the last 12 months.

Although a slight decrease is noted, one in three children and young people have experienced bullying in the last 12 months, indicating this remains a significant issue in NSW.

● Yes ● No ● I'm not sure

## Those more likely to have experienced bullying in 2023



Q. In the last 12 months, have you personally experienced bullying?

Base: All participants who agreed to consent to answer questions on bullying (n=807)



## Frequency

Among those children and young people who had experienced bullying in the past 12 months, more than one in three (36%) experienced bullying weekly. While there was a slight decrease from 2022 (40%), this figure is a significant concern.

In 2023, bullying remains one of the top 10 issues facing children and young people in NSW, with 12% listing bullying, unprompted, as a key issue in both 2022 and 2023.

## Focus

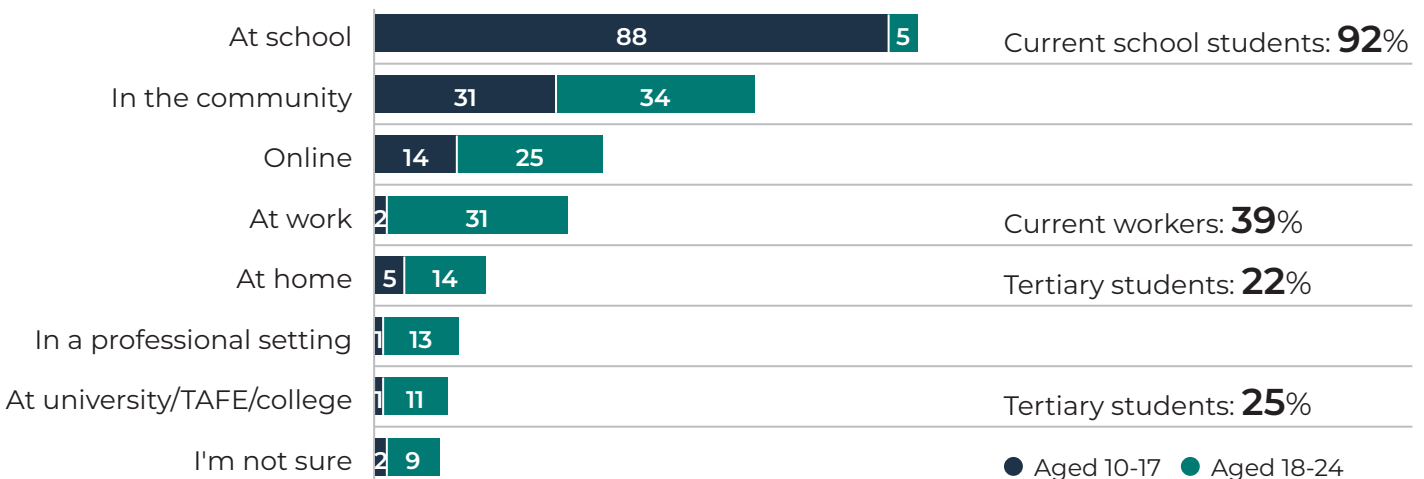
Children and young people said they were most likely to be bullied about their appearance or weight (38%), and social status (22%), followed by their interests or hobbies (20%) and their ethnic/cultural background or skin colour (16%).

Across all demographic groups, appearance or weight was still the more frequent focus of bullying, with the exception of those with a culturally and linguistically diverse background and those who had experienced the youth justice system. Thirty-six percent (36%) of CALD children and young people and 60% who had contact with the youth justice system said they were bullied because of their ethnic/cultural background or skin colour. In addition, it is important to mention that whilst there was a decrease amongst some of the reasons for bullying, ethnicity/cultural background or skin colour bullying had increased since last year – up from 13% (2022) to 16% (2023).

## 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 (39%). For those aged 18-24, still the most likely locations for bullying were online, in the community and at work.

### Where discrimination occurred – 2023 (%)



Q. How often have you experienced bullying over the past 12 months?

Base: Those who have experienced bullying, excluding those who are 'not sure' about its places or situations (2023: n=273, 2022: n=265, 2021: n=237)

Q. 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 2021: n=237, 2022: n=265, 2023: n=273)

Q. In the past 12 months, in which places or situations have you personally experienced bullying? Base: Those who have experienced bullying (2023: n=282, 2022: n=274, 2021: n=237), \*school students (2023: n=188, 2022: n=164, 2021: n=118), \*\*those who are working (2023: n=83, 2022: n=92, 2021: n=87)



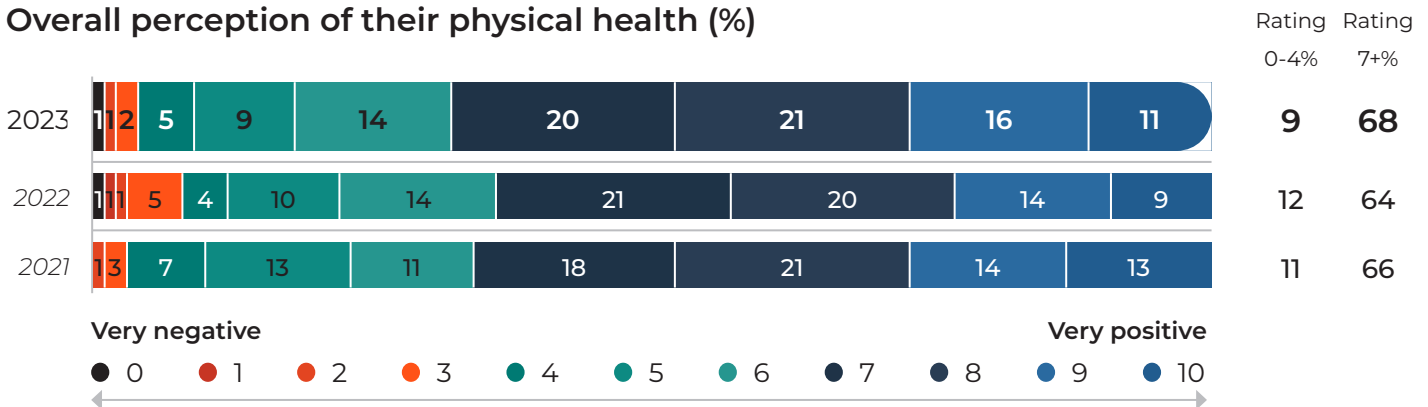
# 03. Health and Wellbeing

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

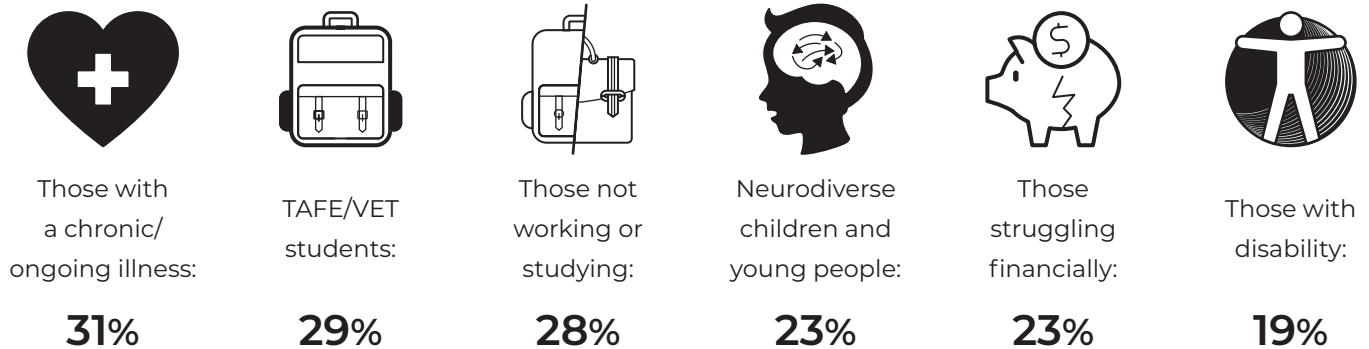
## Self-rated physical and mental health

Perceptions of mental health remain the same between 2022 and 2023, and those rating their physical health as good, have increased slightly since 2022. Amongst the children and young people of NSW, 9% rated their physical health as poor, and 18% rated their mental health as poor.

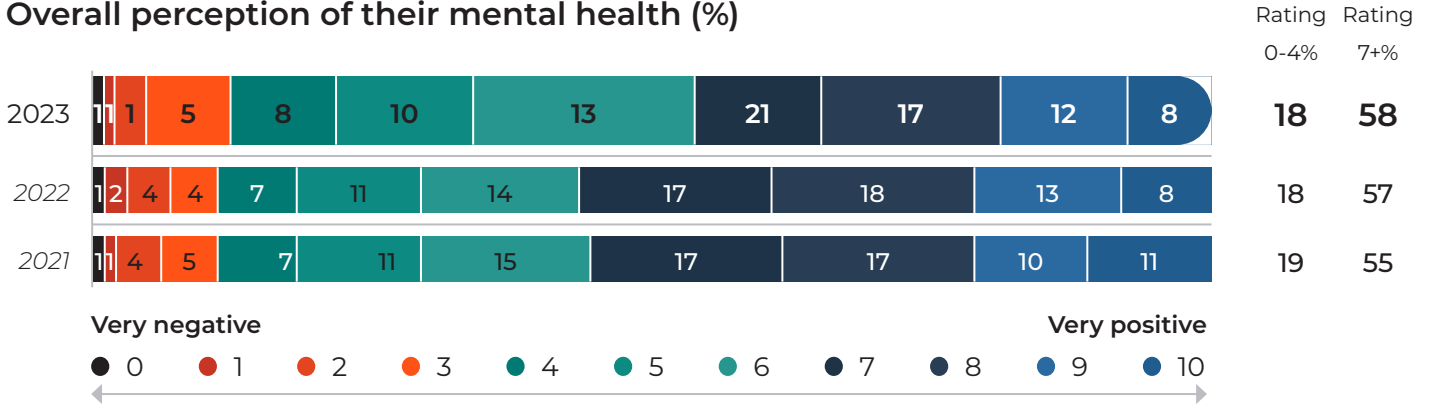
### Overall perception of their physical health (%)



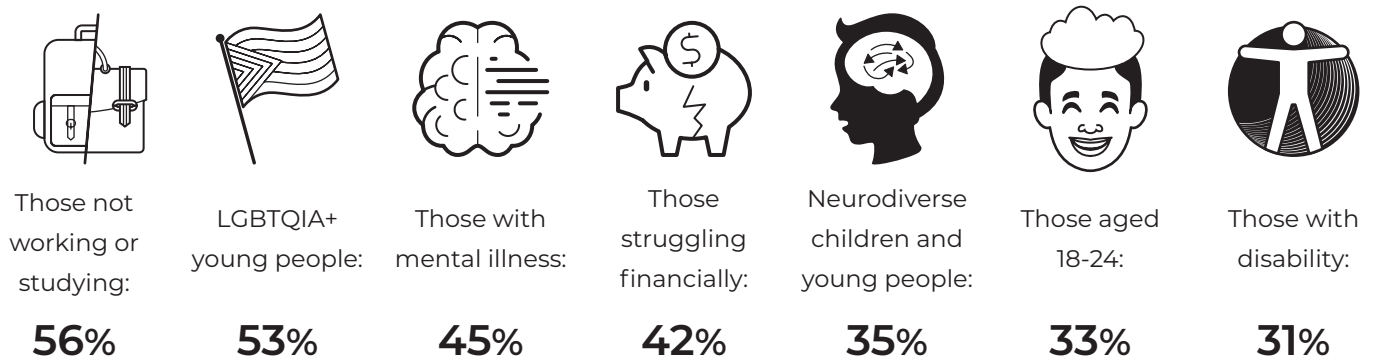
### Those more likely to feel that their physical health is poor in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



### Overall perception of their mental health (%)



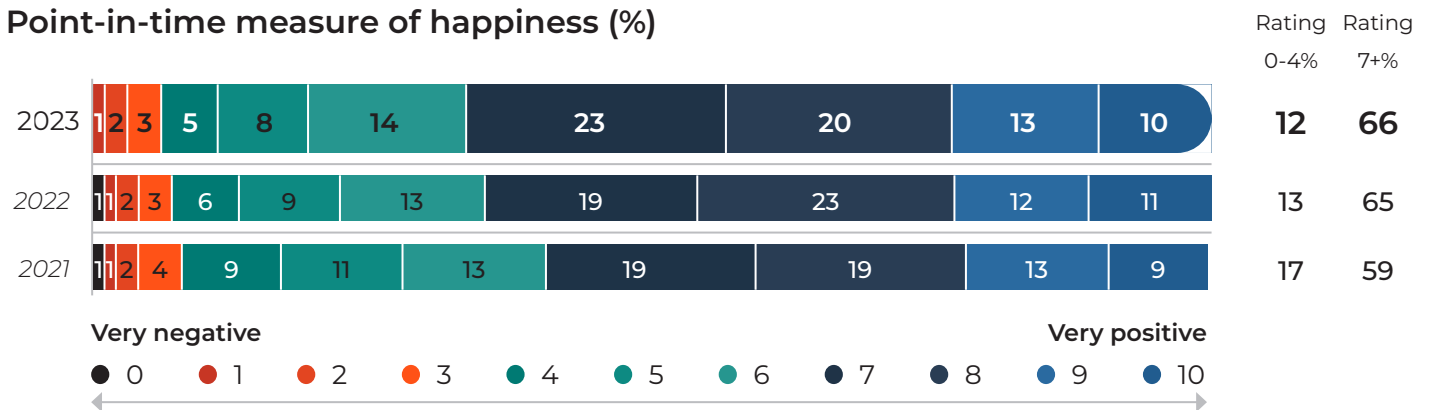
### Those more likely to feel that their mental health is poor in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



## Self-rated happiness, anxiety and resilience

Ratings of happiness remains high, as with 2022, two-thirds of children and young people now rating their current happiness as a 7 or more out of 10.

### Point-in-time measure of happiness (%)



Happiness was highest among those in primary school with 89% rating 7 or more out of 10. ACYP notes that while children and young people in primary school reported positive scores for happiness at this point-in-time measure, broader, ongoing concerns about their mental health should not be dismissed.

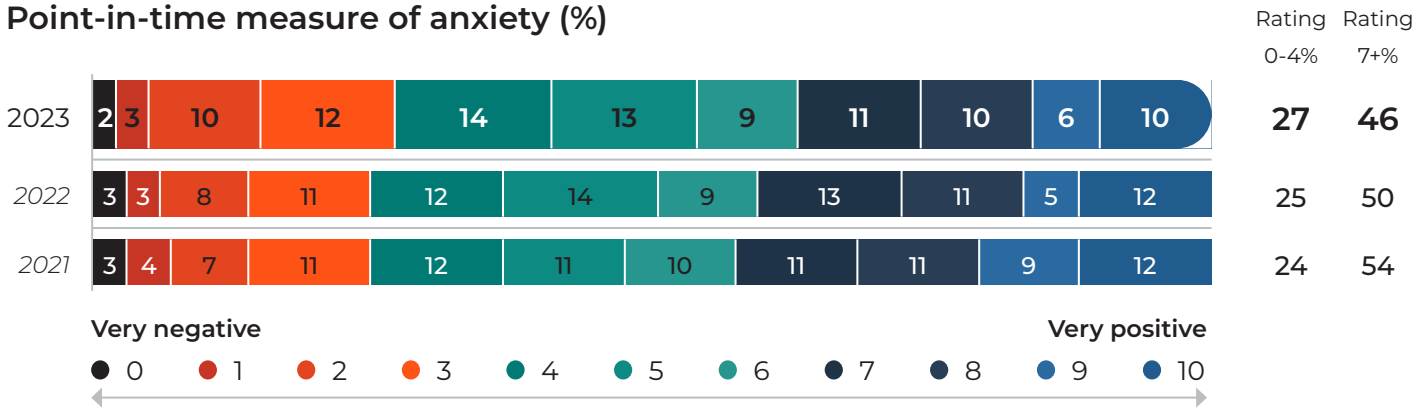
Q. How would you rate your overall physical and mental health? Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)

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

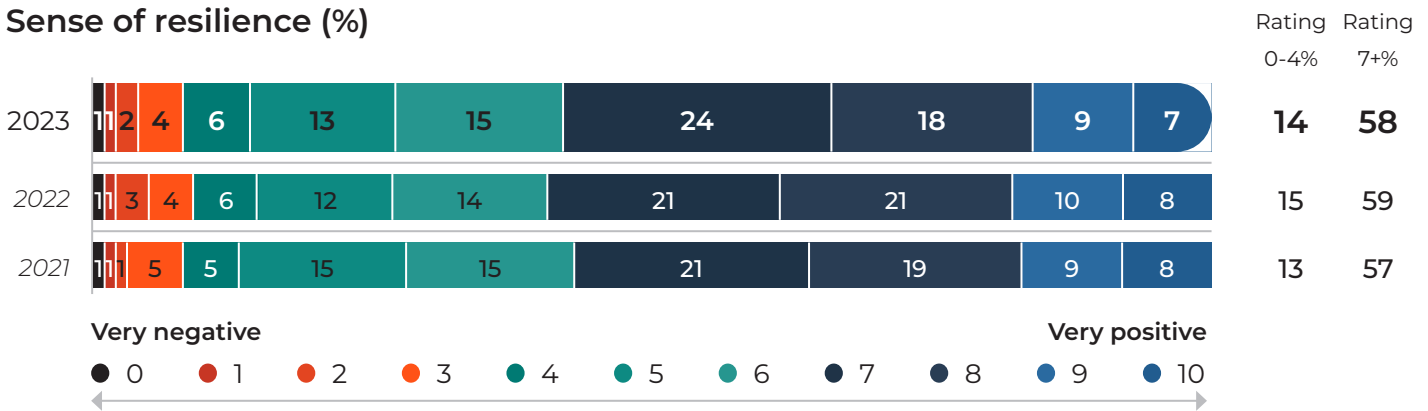


Feelings of anxiety and resilience have remained consistent over the past couple of years, though the number of children and young people reporting that they did not feel anxious on the day of the survey is now below 50%. Those more likely to feel anxious and less resilient were children and young people with a mental illness who had not yet received support.

### Point-in-time measure of anxiety (%)



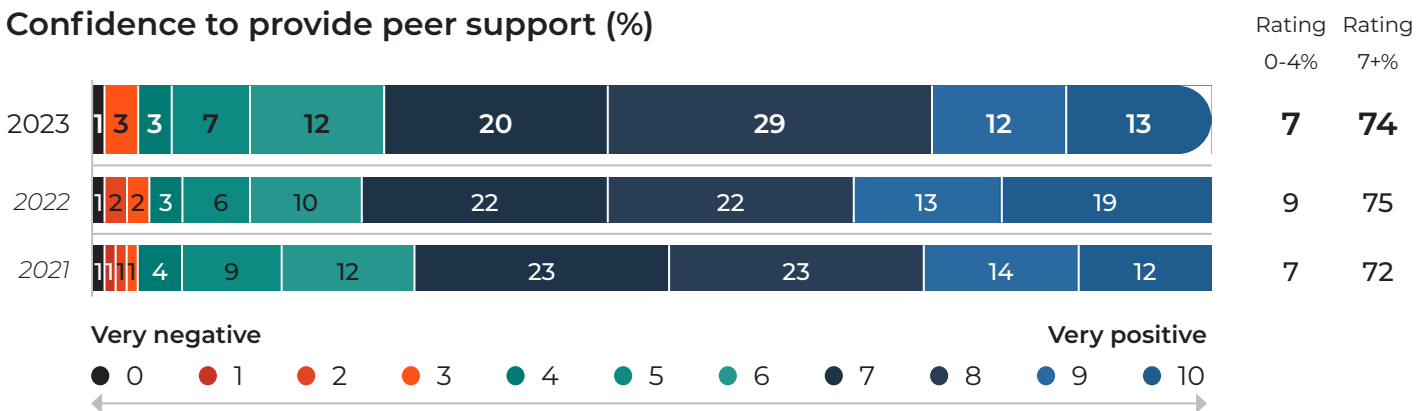
### Sense of resilience (%)



## Confidence to provide peer support

The majority of children and young people feel confident to provide emotional support to their friends, with only a slight decrease of this metric over the past year from 75% to 74%.

### Confidence to provide peer support (%)



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

Q. To what extent do you see yourself as a resilient person? Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)

Q. How confident do you feel in your ability to support your friends with their mental and emotional wellbeing?

Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)



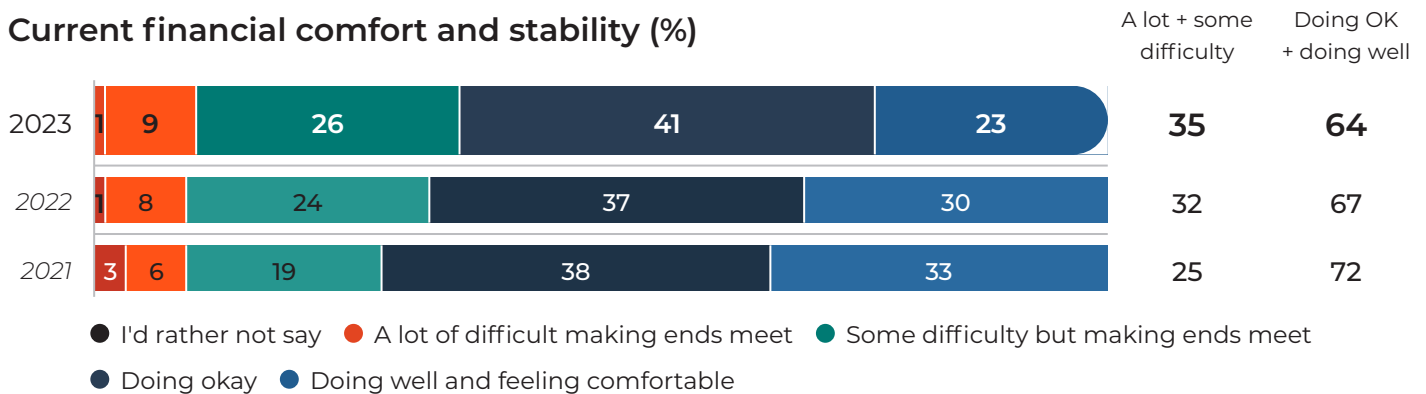
# 04. A Good Standard of Living

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

There has been a decline in young people's financial situation, with fewer reporting they are 'doing well and feeling comfortable' and more slipping into financial difficulty. Significantly, more than a third (35%) of young people now report having 'a lot' or 'some' difficulty making ends meet – a 10% jump since 2021. High cost of living is now the number one unprompted issue faced by children and young people in NSW at 35%.

### Current financial comfort and stability (%)



### Those more likely to feel they are having some or a lot of difficulty making ends meet in 2023



Neurodiverse children and young people:

61%



Those with disability:

57%



Those with mental illness:

52%



Females:

43%



Regional NSW:

43%<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Not statistically significant.

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

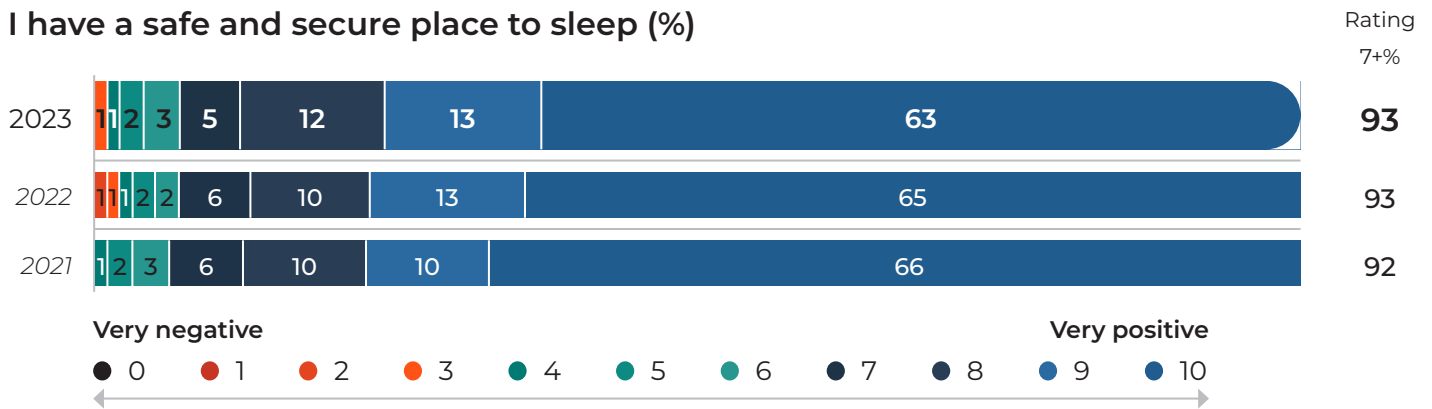
Base: Those aged 18+ or financially independent (2023: n=509, 2022: n=513, 2021: n=484)



# Access to basic needs

Most children and young people feel their basic living needs are being met adequately which includes, a safe place to sleep, enough clothing, having a balanced/healthy diet and access to services. This has remained stable over the past three years. However, while a majority agree they can easily access services and support, there has been a decline in the strength of agreement down from 85% (2021) to 81% (2023). It is important to highlight that those cohorts that were most likely to disagree that they had access to basic needs were those who had experienced the youth justice system and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

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



## Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



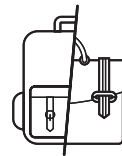
Those who have had contact with the justice system:

**18%**



Young parents:

**14%**



Those not working or studying:

**13%**



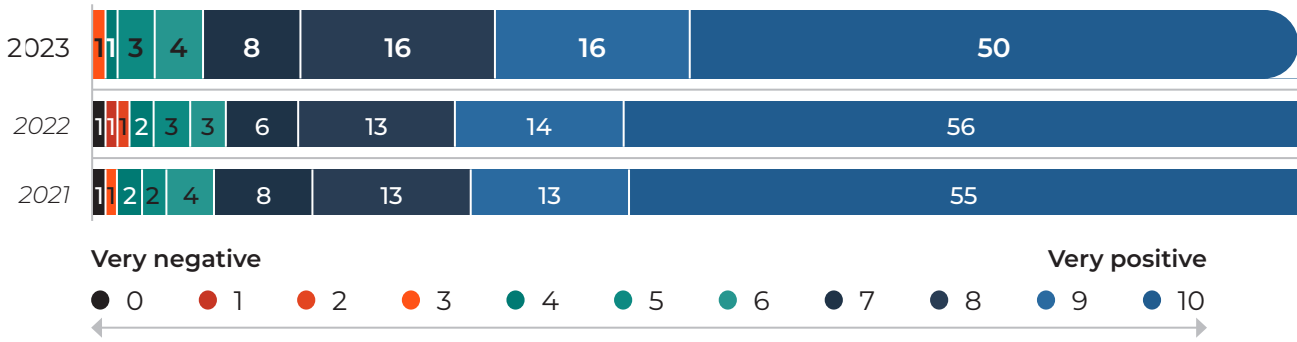
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island children and young people

**8%**



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

Rating 7+%



### Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



Those who have had contact with the justice system:

**17%**



Those struggling financially:

**10%**



Those with disability:

**8%**

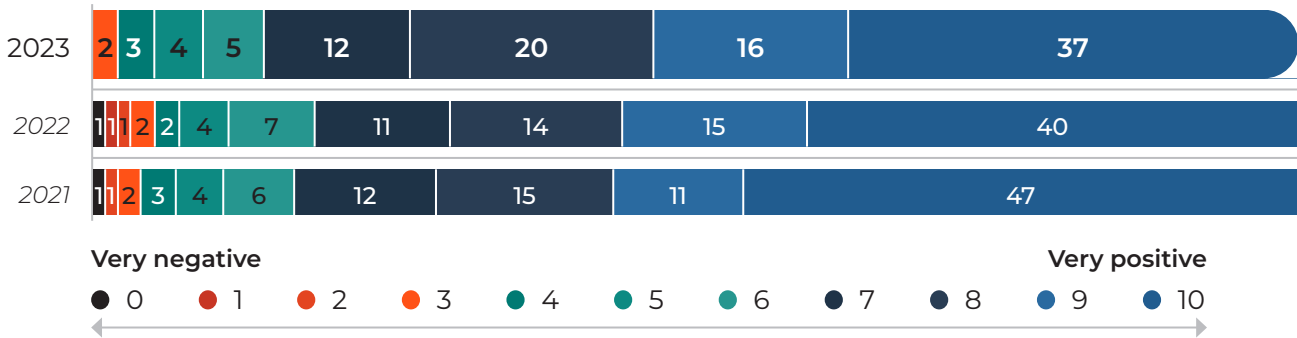


Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island children and young people

**8%**

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

Rating 7+%

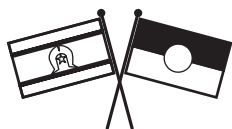


### Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



Those not working or studying:

**28%**



ATSI children and young people:

**22%**



Those with a chronic/ongoing illness:

**22%**



Neurodiverse children and young people:

**21%**



Those struggling financially:

**16%**



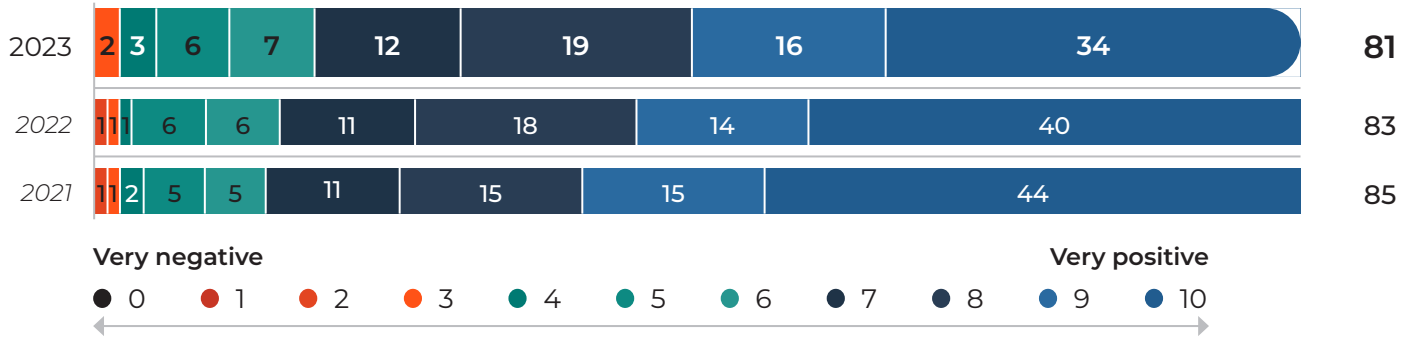
Those with disability:

**15%**

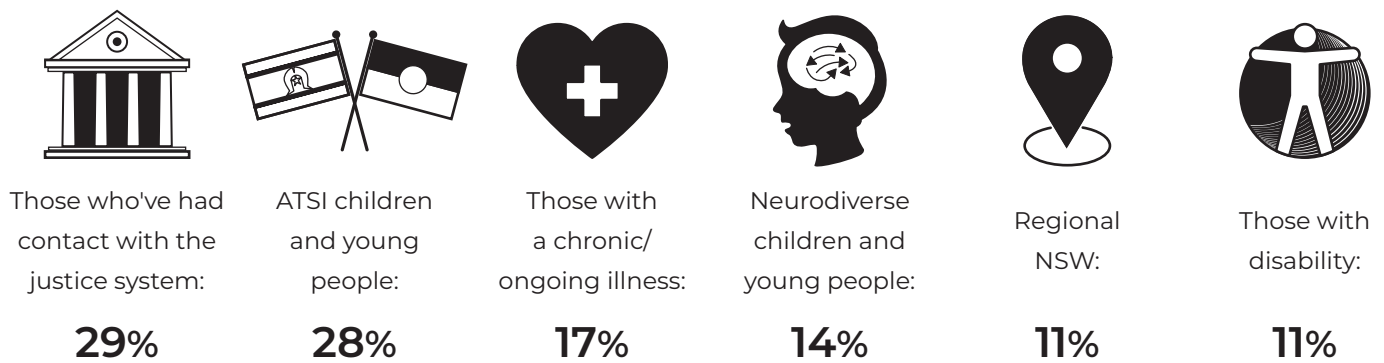


### I can easily access services and support (%)

Rating  
7+%



### Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2023 (rating 0-4/10)



## A Good Standard of Living in focus

Whilst most children and young people are doing generally well across all metrics measured in the Good Standard of Living commitment area, the rise in the cost of living is a key concern for children and young people which led the ACYP team to undertake a piece of work in 2023 to explore this in more detail.

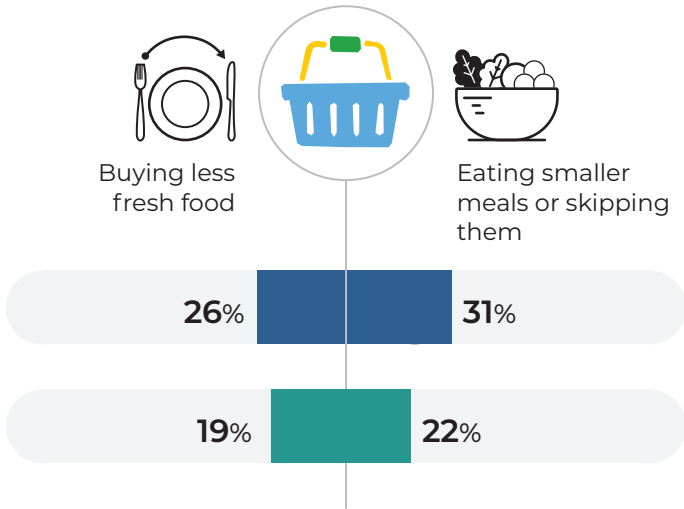
Q. The next couple of questions are about your day-to-day living situation. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these statements?  
Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)



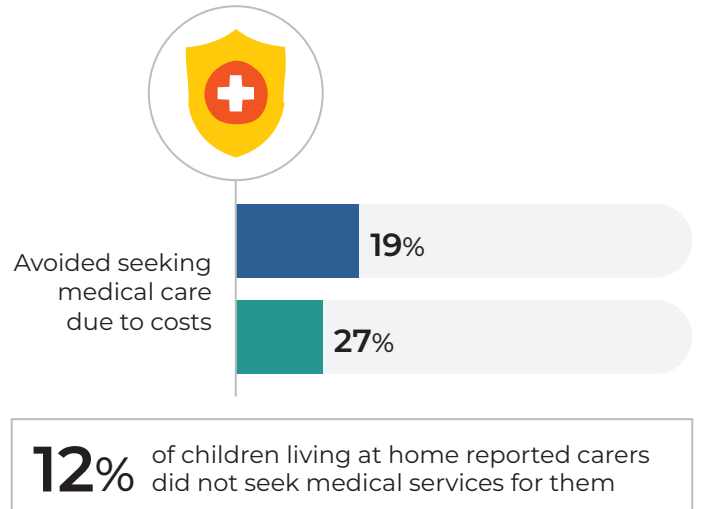
### The impacts of the Cost of Living crisis on children and young people

● Young adults (those aged 18+ or living independently) ● Children and young people\*

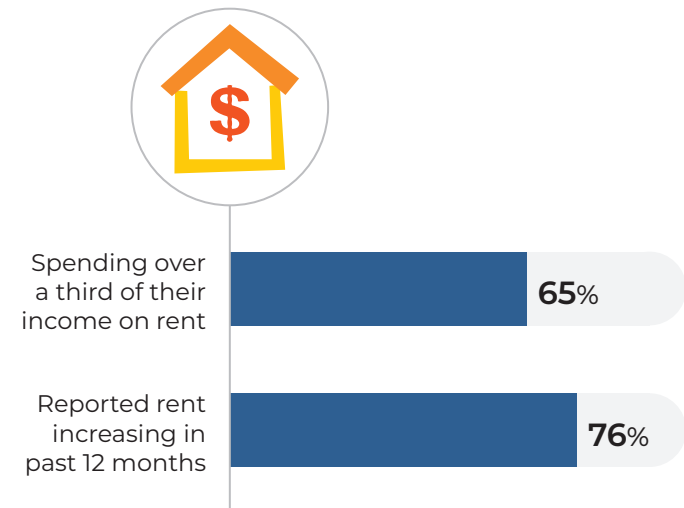
#### Groceries and food



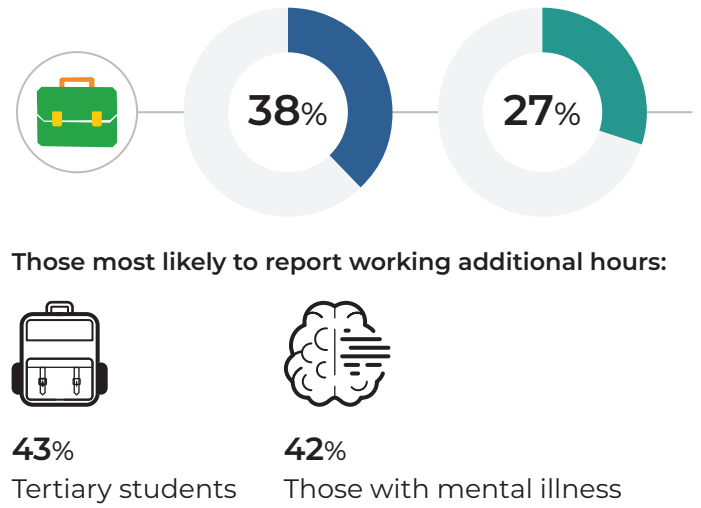
#### Healthcare and medical costs



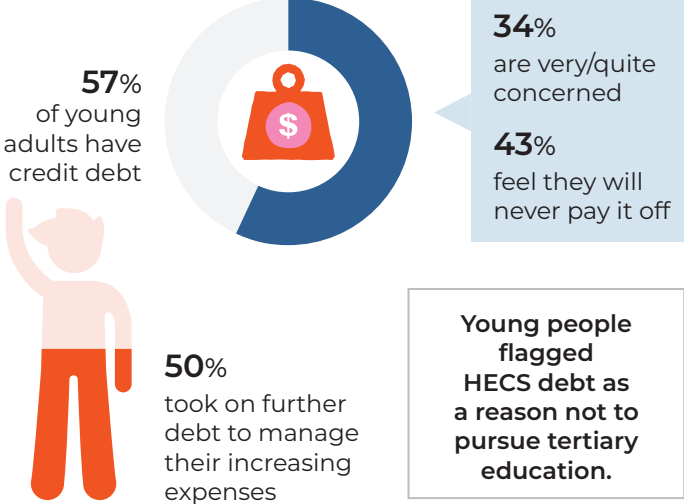
#### Housing and rent



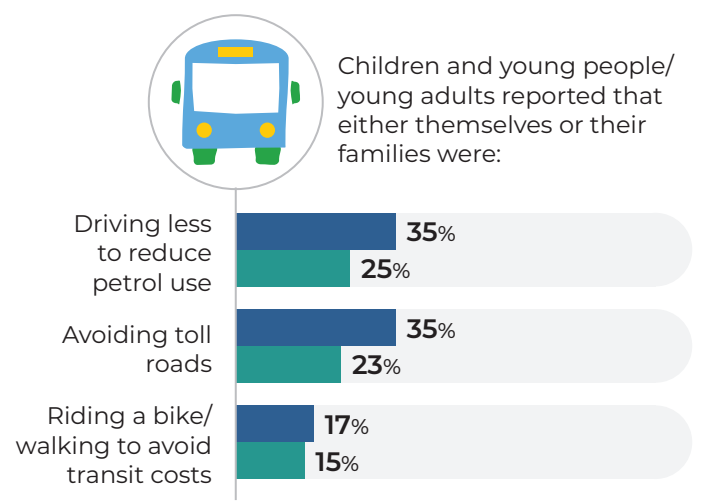
#### Employment and income



#### Debt



#### Transport







# Case Study: A Good Standard of Living

## Affordable housing for young people

Housing and rental affordability has become a key concern for young people as they deal with the rising cost of living, impacting their ability to enjoy a reasonable standard of living.

Children and young people who have experienced out-of-home care, who experience family violence, have mental health illnesses, struggle with alcohol and drug addiction, or are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people, are the most at risk of homelessness.<sup>5</sup> Young out-of-home care leavers are at particular risk for homelessness: amongst those aged 15-17, one in three will experience homelessness within a year of exiting care.<sup>6</sup>

### Foyer Central

Foyer Central, which is located in Chippendale, is an innovative affordable housing program that provides young people with tailored, wrap-around support in the areas of education, employment, social connection, housing and living skills, and health and wellbeing. The program is available to young people aged 18 – 22 who have experienced out-of-home care and are at risk of homelessness.

The program works by asking each young person to commit to the Foyer Deal, which requires that they complete a number of hours each week working towards their goals in education, employment, social connections, housing and living skills, as well as health and wellbeing. To help them achieve this, each person is assigned their own youth development coach.

In order to help residents build their skills in accessing and maintaining stable housing, each young person signs a lease agreement with the housing provider – St George Community Housing – and is responsible for paying a subsidised rent on time, maintaining their studio apartment, and participating in communal life in the Foyer. On leaving Foyer Central, they have a healthy tenancy ledger, which enables staff to advocate for them when looking for rental properties.

Since it opened two and half years ago, 93 young people have lived at Foyer Central, and “most of them have found both rental accommodation and work,” says Foyer Central Manager, Aimee Cavallaro. The coaches will also work with each young person to identify education, training and job interests, and will work with employment providers, and support them when they have job interviews.

“Young people thrive when they have safety and stability and when they can experience the potential to work and study, and live independently,” says Cavallaro. She adds that spending between 18 months to two years at Foyer Central gives young people the opportunity to experience stability, says Cavallaro.

<sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup> AIHW 2022 Specialist homelessness services annual report 2022-23.

Accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/homelessness-services/specialist-homelessness-services-annual-report/contents/clients-leaving-care>



## Case Study: A Good Standard of Living

### ■ **Foyer Central cont.**

Young people at Foyer Central are also provided with an onsite mental wellbeing counsellor, as well as a specialist in drug and alcohol addiction.

“You can talk about jobs and education with young people - but if their mental health and wellbeing are not in place, nothing else will work,” says Victoria Flanagan, Principal Policy Officer, Research and Social Policy at Uniting, which partners with Foyer Central.

An analysis of Youth Foyers by Accenture,<sup>7</sup> found that 80% of Youth Foyer participants exit to stable housing (72% to private housing), and that these young people are 1.6 times more likely to achieve a higher level of education, and are 60% less likely to be involved in the justice system.

Foyer Central is a collaboration between Uniting NSW and ACT, which manages the day-to-day operations of Foyer Central, the NSW Government, Social Ventures Australia, and helps fund the program through social impact bonds, and St George Community Housing, which provides the accommodation and manages the rental leases for Foyer Central.

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<sup>7</sup> Accenture. 2022. *Under One Roof, the Social and Economic Impact of Youth Foyers*. December 2022.

Accessed at: [https://foyer.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FYF\\_UnderOneRoof\\_Summary\\_singlepagesfinal.pdf](https://foyer.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/FYF_UnderOneRoof_Summary_singlepagesfinal.pdf)

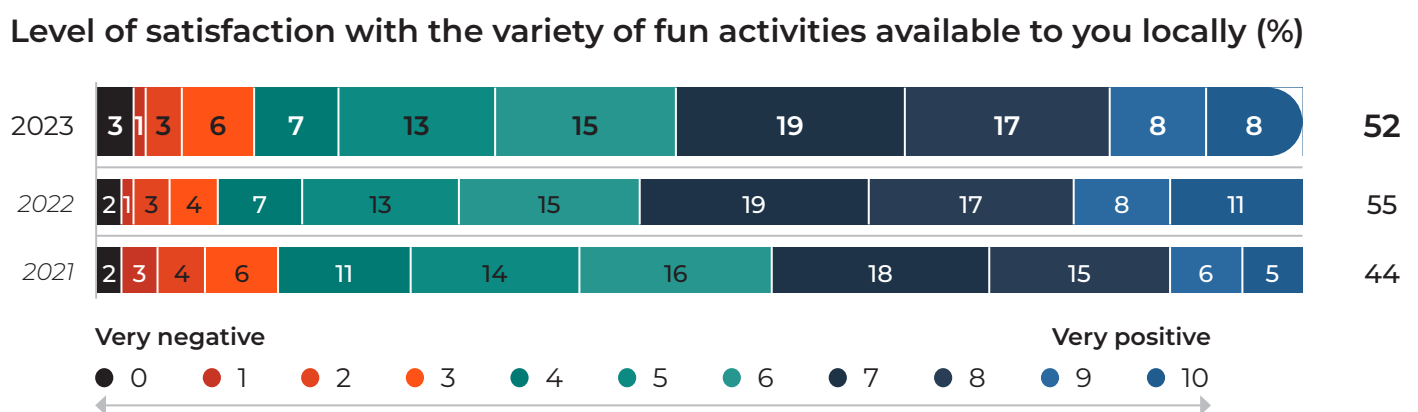
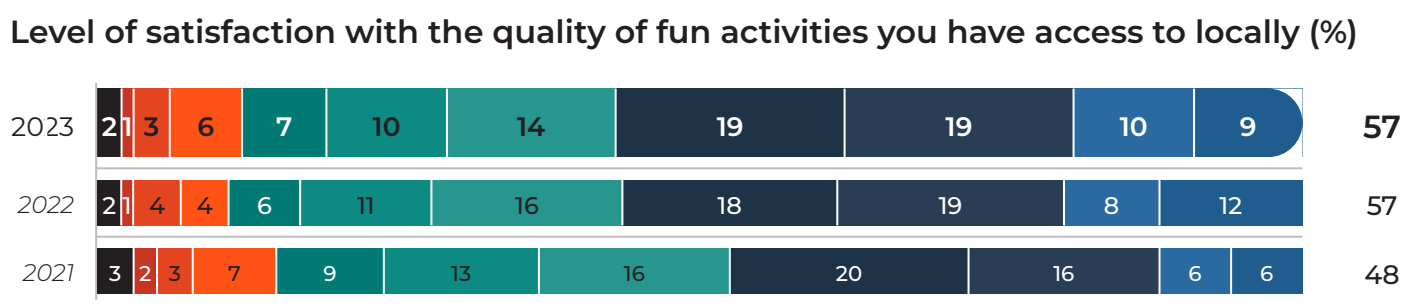
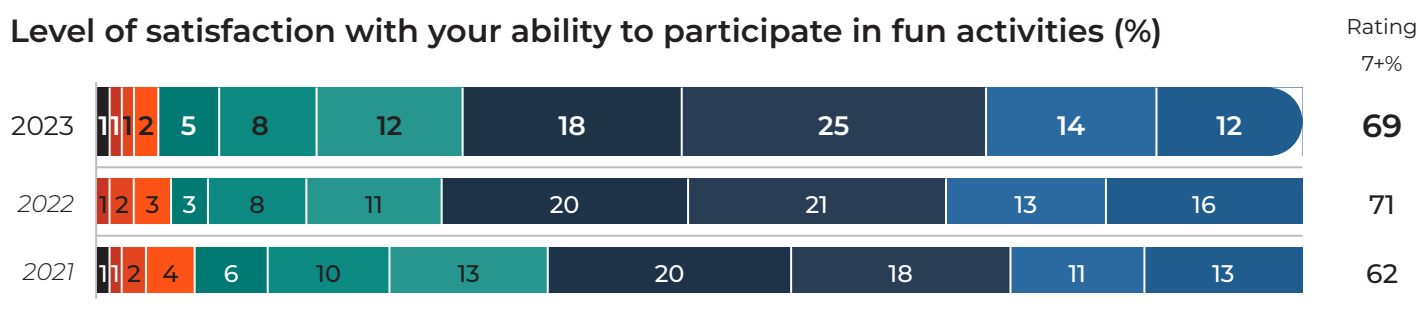


# 05. Environments for Joy and Fun

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

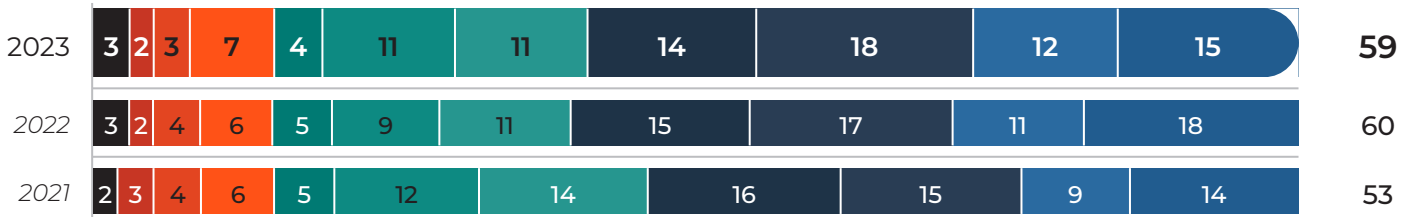
Children and young people have maintained a strong sense of satisfaction with local fun activities over the past year. Children and young people are most satisfied with the accessibility of fun activities which has remained at the same level since 2022, but satisfaction with the variety of activities has dropped. In 2022, 55% of children and young people rated their satisfaction positively 7 or more out of 10, compared to 52% in 2023.



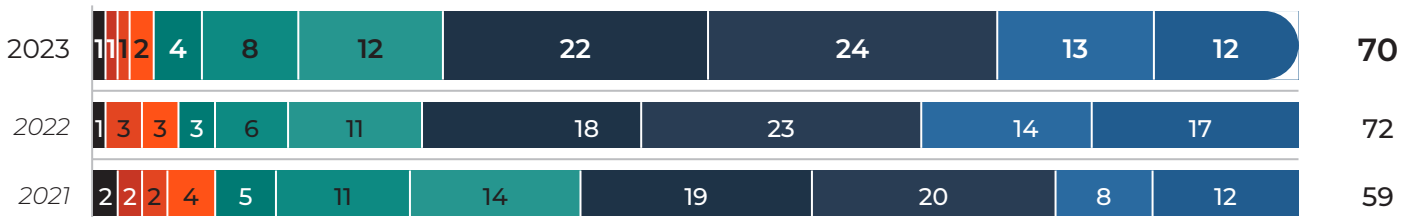


### Satisfaction with your level of participation in sport or physical activity (%)

Rating  
7+%



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



In 2023, there were some groups that faced more difficulty than others when it came to engaging in fun activities.

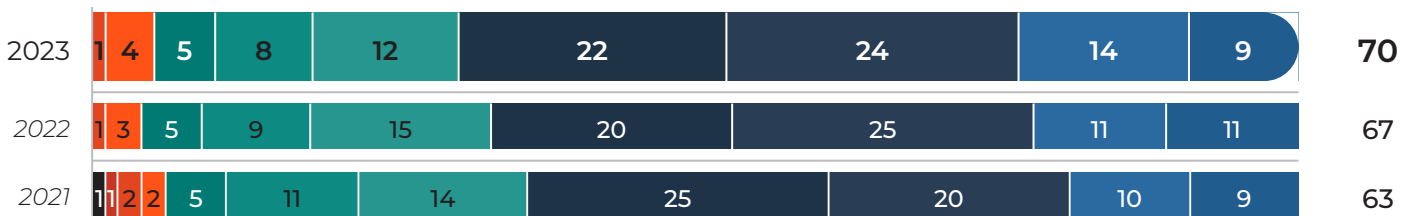
Poorer scores were more likely across all measures for those children and young people with a disability, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and those with a mental illness. Females were also less likely to participate in fun activities, have access to quality activities and were less likely to participate in sport or physical activity.

## Feeling safe in public situations

Consistent with previous years, the majority of children and young people feel safe in all public situations, although they are more likely to feel safe in institutional settings rather than online or in the general community. Notably the feelings of safety at school have increased slightly since 2022.

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

Rating  
7+%



Very negative

Very positive



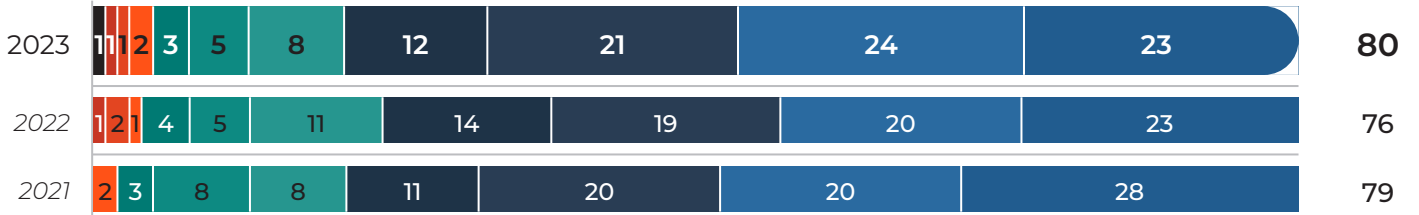
Q. Next, please think about the sorts of things you do to have fun or things that you enjoy doing. How satisfied are you with...?

Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017, 2022: n=1,005, 2021: n=815)

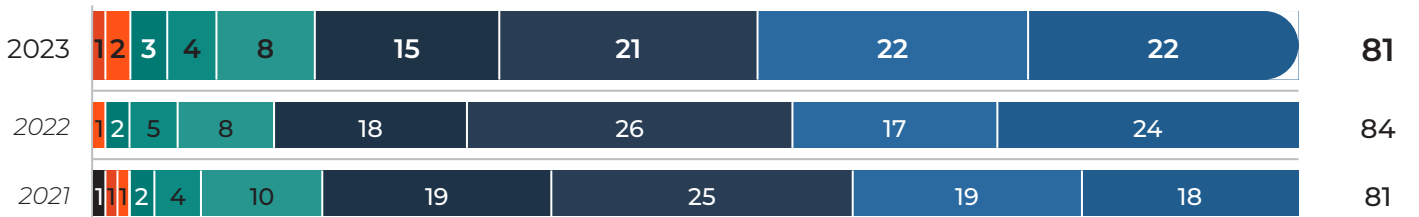


### Feelings of safety at school (%)

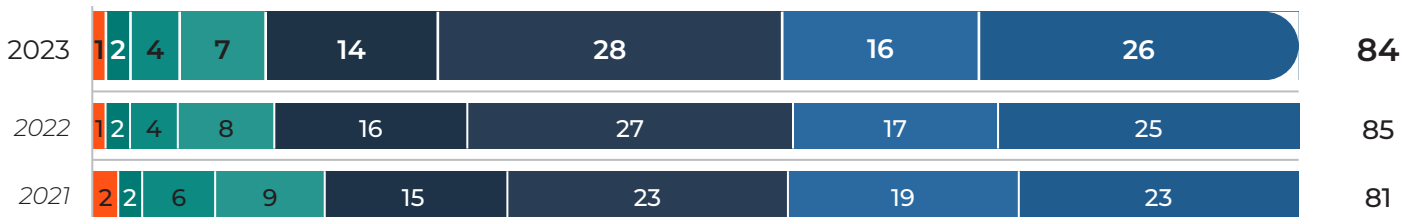
Rating  
7+%



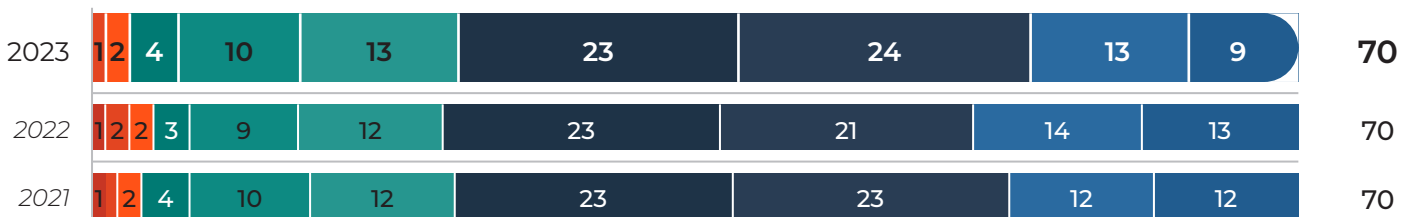
### Feelings of safety at university, TAFE or college (%)



### Feelings of safety at work (%)



### Feelings of safety online (%)



Very negative

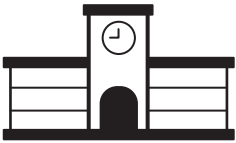




Consistent with last year's results, those with a mental illness were least likely to feel safe in most situations, including at school and in public areas. However, around one in five children and young people with a mental illness and 1 in 5 young parents (22%) were more likely to feel unsafe online.

### Those more likely to report feeling unsafe in 2023 at (rating 0-4)

#### School:



- Has a mental health condition and not received support..... **24%**

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- Has a mental health condition..... **21%**

---

- Identifies as LGBTQIA+..... **18%**

---

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people..... **15%**

---

- Those with disability..... **14%**

#### Online:



- Young parents..... **22%**

---

- Has a mental health condition and not received support..... **21%**

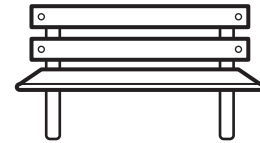
---

- Has a mental health condition..... **16%**

---

- Those with disability..... **15%**

#### Public areas:



- Has a mental health condition..... **25%**

---

- Those with disability..... **22%**

---

- Identifies as LGBTQIA+..... **22%**

---

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people..... **18%**

Q. To what extent do you feel safe when you are in these different situations?

Base: All participants though some options only shown as relevant- 2022 (n=1,005); 2021 (n=815).



# 06. Respect and Acceptance

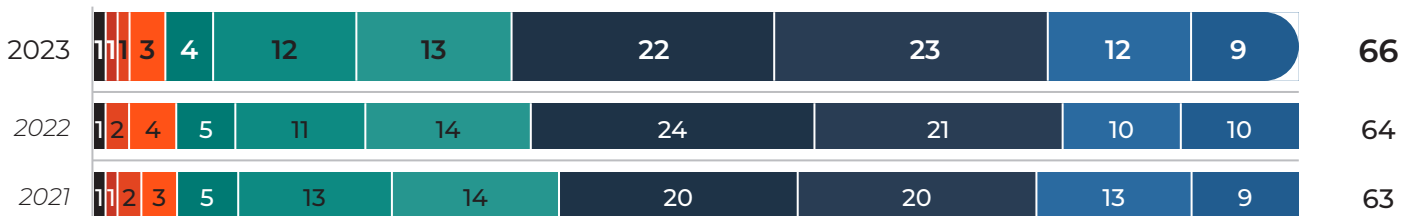
Children and young people feel respected, accepted and included in society. They are part of a community that supports them to be proud of their culture, diversity and individual identity. They are free from discrimination, racism and structural violence.

## Level of respect and acceptance experienced

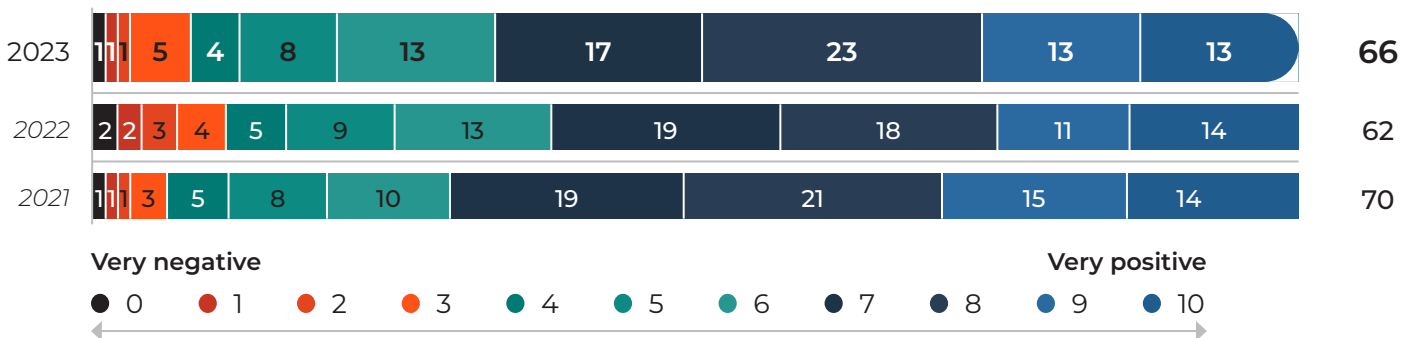
In 2023, most children and young people reported being satisfied with the level of respect they are shown within education and work settings and their local community. The level of respect at university/TAFE/college has remained the same from the previous year (73%), and across the other three metrics of school, work, local community - there have been slight increases.

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

### The local community (%)

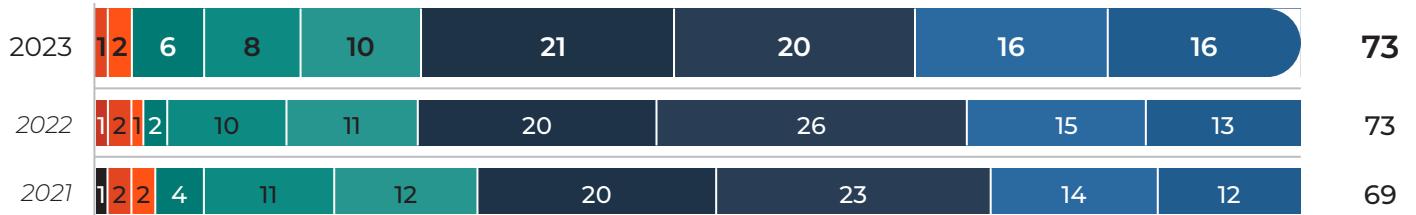


### At school (%)

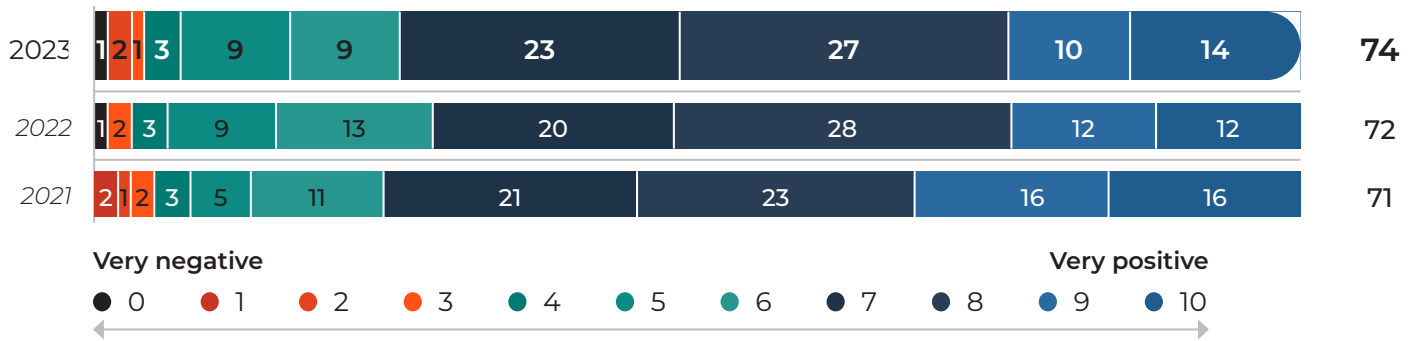




### At university/TAFE/college (%)



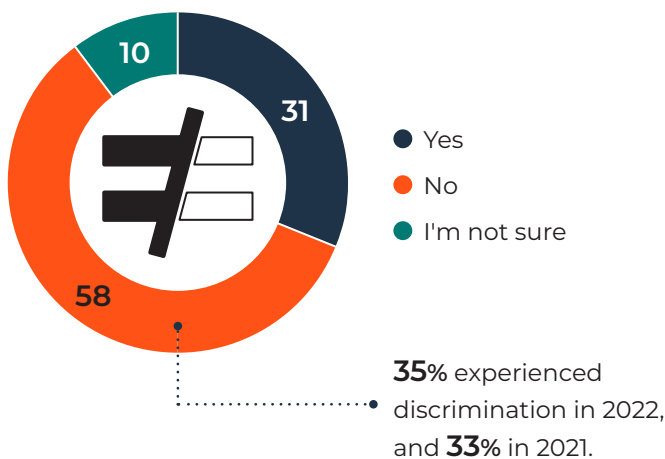
### At work (%)



## Prevalence of discrimination

One in three children and young people reported experiencing discrimination in the past year. Cohorts more likely to have experienced discrimination are young parents (59%), those with a disability (50%), young people who identify as LGBTQIA+ (49%) and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people (48%).

### Experienced discrimination in the last 12 months



### Frequency of discrimination

Concerningly, in 2023 a quarter of those who had been discriminated against in the past 12 months, experienced it on a weekly basis. This is consistent with last year's data and there has been no substantial improvement. Discrimination was higher amongst neurodiverse children and young people (71%), young parents (59%), those with a disability (50%), and those who identify as LGBTQIA+ (49%).

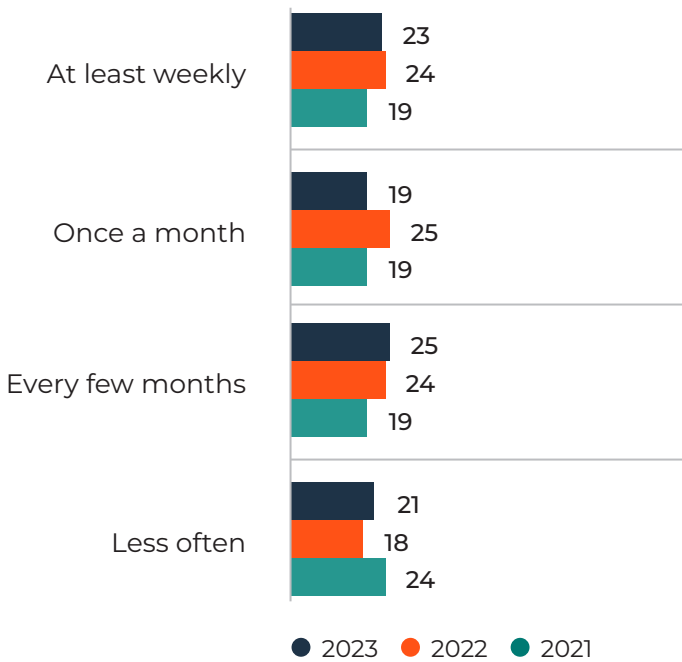
Q. The next question asks about respect and acceptance. How satisfied are you with...?

Base: All participants (2023: n=1,017, 2022: 1,005, 2021: n=815), Tertiary students (2023: n=261, 2022: n=253, 2021: n=294), those who are working (2023: n=379, 2022: n=373, 2021: n=310), School students (2023: n=513, 2022: n=517, 2021: n=360)



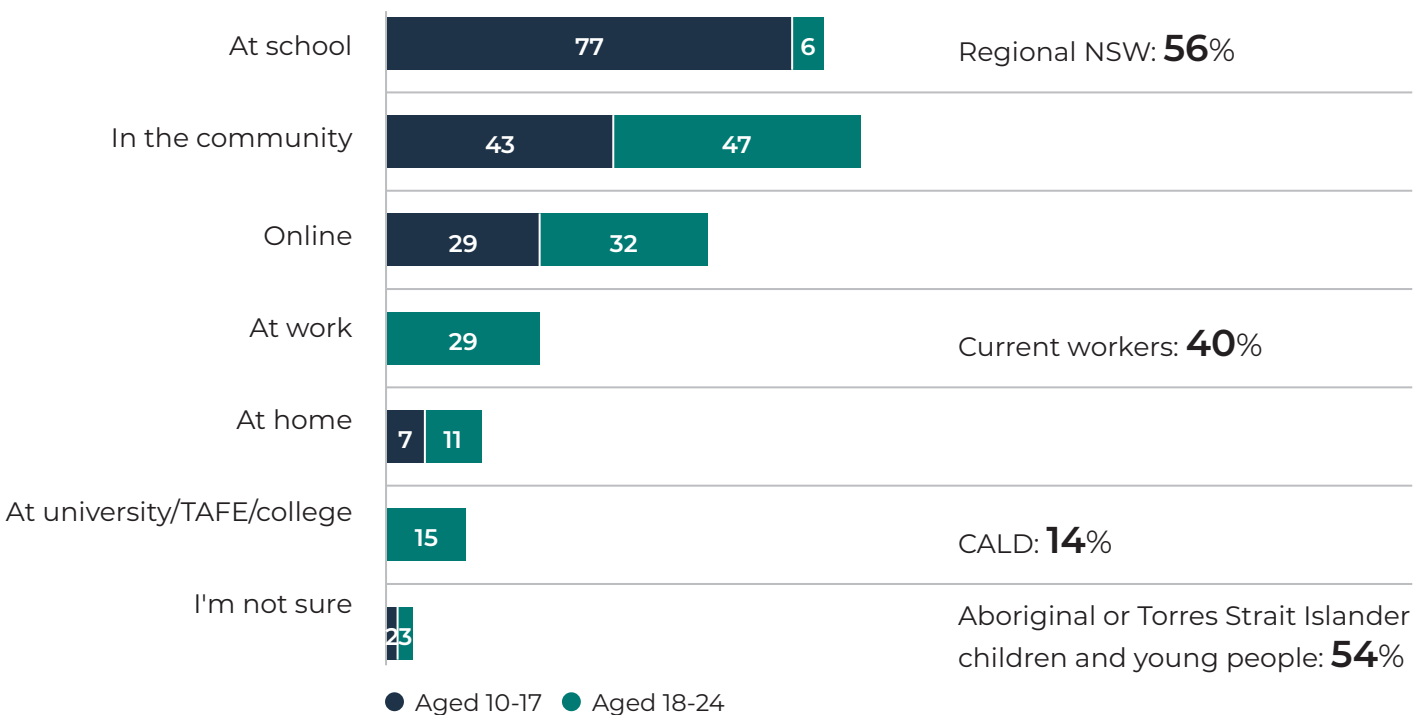


### Prevalence of discrimination amongst those who have experienced it in the last 12 months...



In 2023, the top reasons children and young people reported for discrimination were on the basis of ethnic/cultural background or skin colour; appearance or weight, and gender. Discrimination has increased in the community for those aged 10-17 from 31% (2022) to 43% in 2023 but this has decreased for those aged 18-24 from 52% (2022) to 47% in 2023. Experiences of discrimination in school have decreased among those aged 10-17 from 84% (2022) to 77% in 2023, however discrimination has increased at university/ TAFE/ college for those aged 18-24 from 11% (2022) to 15% in 2023.

### Where discrimination occurred – 2023 (%)



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 (2023: n=240, 2022: n=282, 2021: n=232)



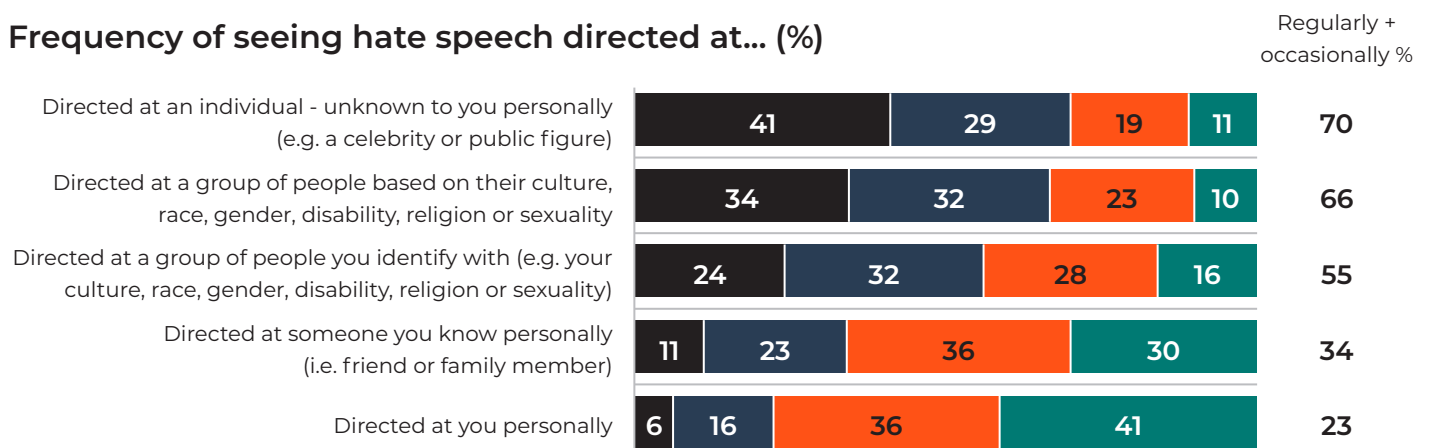
# Respect and Acceptance in focus

Respect and Acceptance was one of the two commitment areas of focus for 2023. As a result, the questions below were added to the 2023 Youth Week survey to explore the experiences of children and young people with hate speech and the complaints processes for discrimination. Children and young people were asked about their exposure to hate speech online, their responses to hate speech and how they could be encouraged to take action against hate speech. They were also asked about their awareness of formal complaint mechanisms, their comfort with reporting discrimination, and how they could be encouraged to make a formal complaint related to discrimination.

## Exposure to hate speech online

Most young people reported seeing hate speech online on a regular basis. While it was mainly targeted at others, 3 in 5 regularly encountered hate speech online that was targeted at them directly, or a group of people they identify with.

### Frequency of seeing hate speech directed at... (%)



● Regularly (at least once a week) ● Occasionally (every few weeks) ● Rarely (monthly or less often) ● Never

Have seen hate speech either directed at **them personally** or directed at **a group of people they identify with** either regularly or occasionally: **60%**

### Those more likely to have seen hate speech directed at *them personally*, or had hate speech directed at *a group of people they identify with*:



LGBTQIA+ young people:

89%



Those with mental illness:

75%



Those with disability:

70%



Those struggling financially:

69%



Those in the workforce:

67%



Concerned about the cost of living:

67%

Q. How often, if at all, have you seen hate speech online (i.e. on websites, social media, videos, images or comment threads) that was:

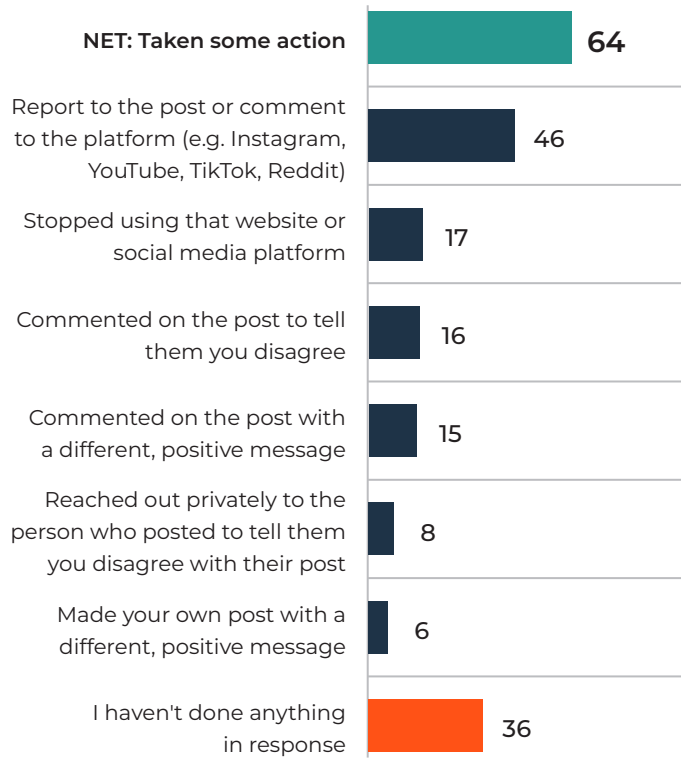
Base: Participants who consented to answer questions on hate speech (n=652)



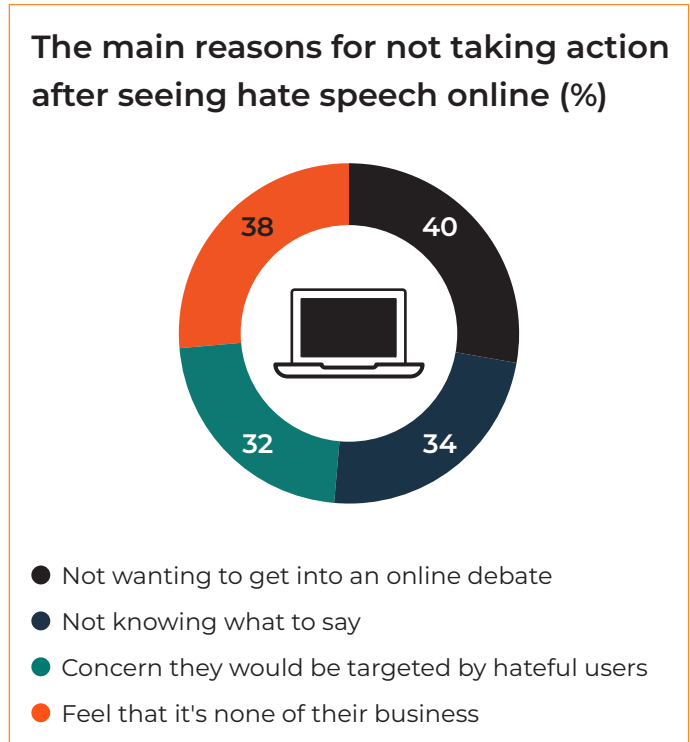
### Response to hate speech

Almost half of those who encountered hate speech online reported it to the platform. However, only a minority responded directly or stopped using the platform, and around one third did nothing at all.

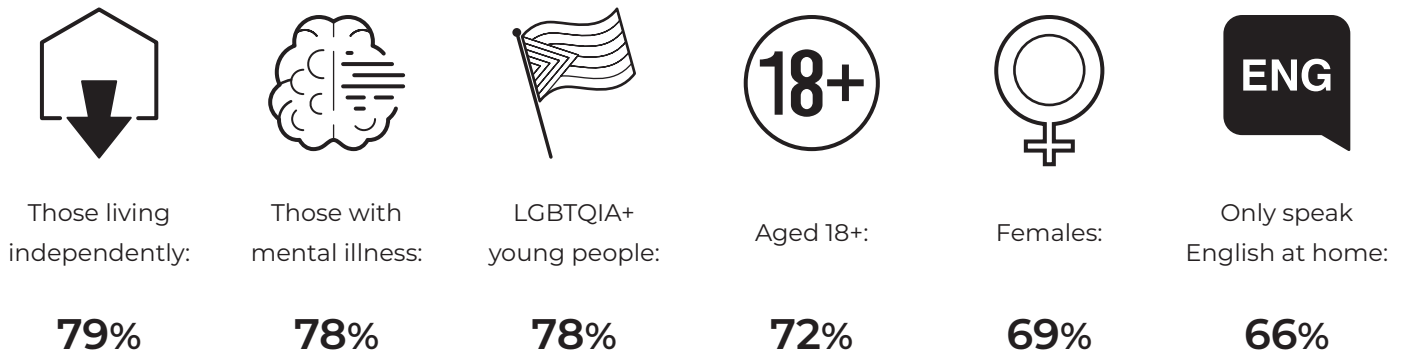
#### What have you done to respond to hate speech (%)



#### The main reasons for not taking action after seeing hate speech online (%)



#### Those more likely to take some action after seeing hate speech online:



Q. What, if anything, have you done in response to seeing hate speech?

Base: Participants who consented to answer questions on hate speech (n=652)

Q. Which of the following are the main reasons you would choose not to take action after seeing hate speech online?

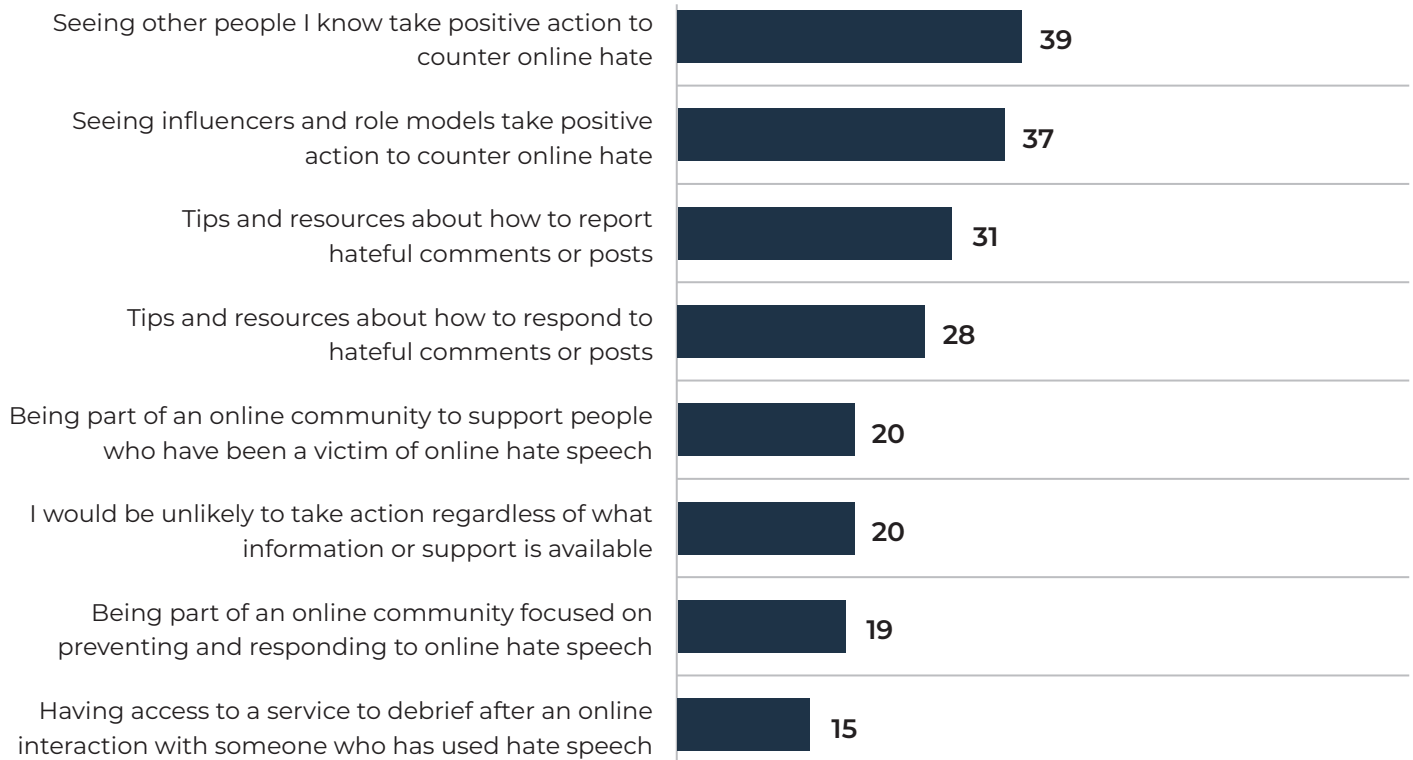
Base: Participants who did not do anything in response to seeing hate speech online (n=234)



## How to encourage action against hate speech

Young people reported looking to their peers and role models to demonstrate appropriate behaviours in response to hate speech. They also expressed an appetite for information and guidance on how to respond to hate speech online.

### Actions to build comfort in responding to hate speech online (%)



## Complaints processes

### Awareness of channels to make a formal complaint

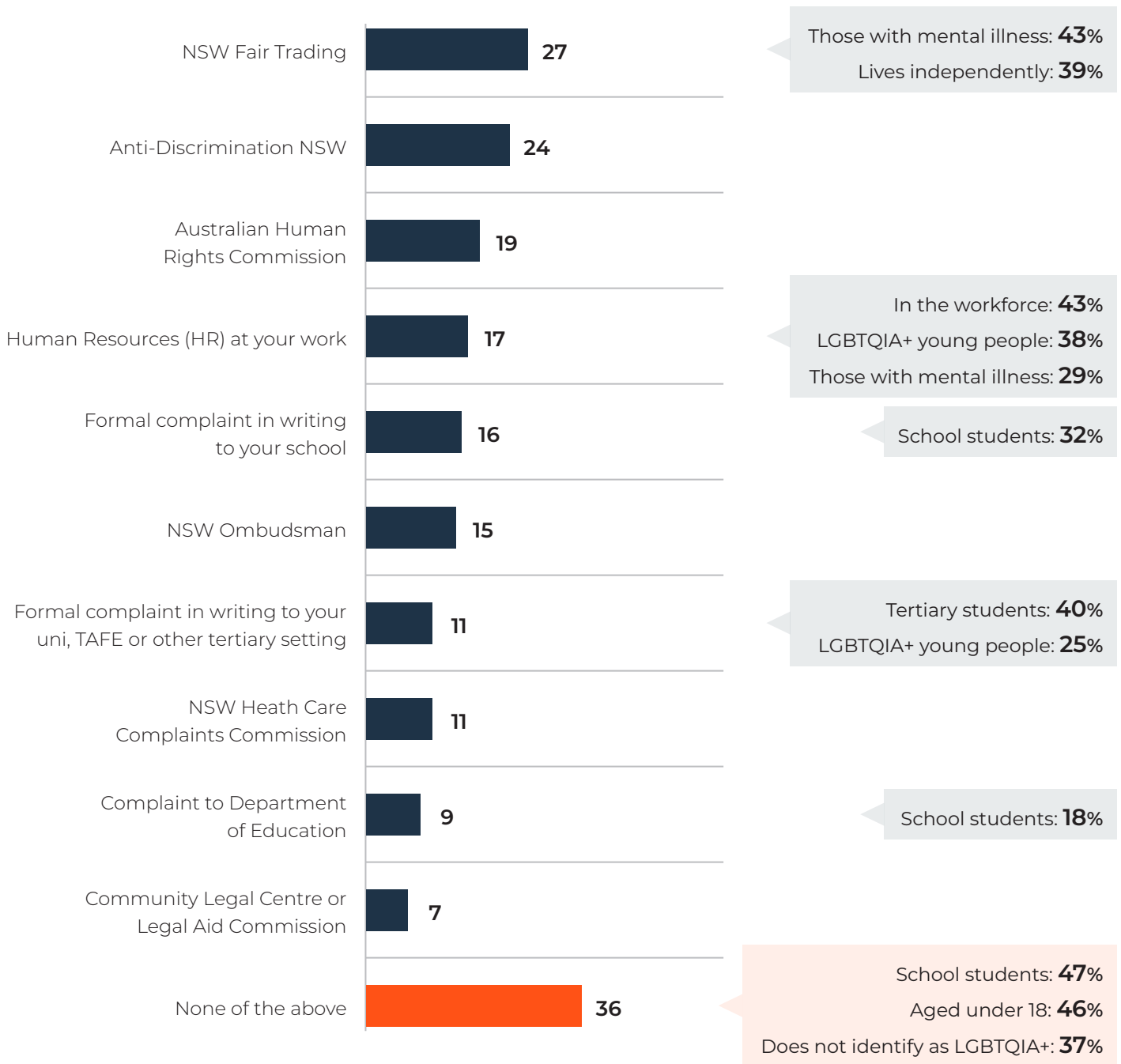
There is significant room to improve awareness of the formal avenues young people can use to report discrimination, particularly among those aged under 18. Other gaps in awareness include fewer than half of those in the workforce being aware they can make a complaint to Human Resources. Those not aware of any of the channels listed made up a majority at 36%.

Which of the following would make you feel more comfortable to take action when you see hate speech online?

Base: Participants who consented to answer questions on hate speech (n=652)



## Awareness of channels to make a formal complaint about discrimination (%)



Q. Are you aware of the following places to make formal complaints about discrimination?

Base: All participants who consented to answer questions on discrimination (n=630),

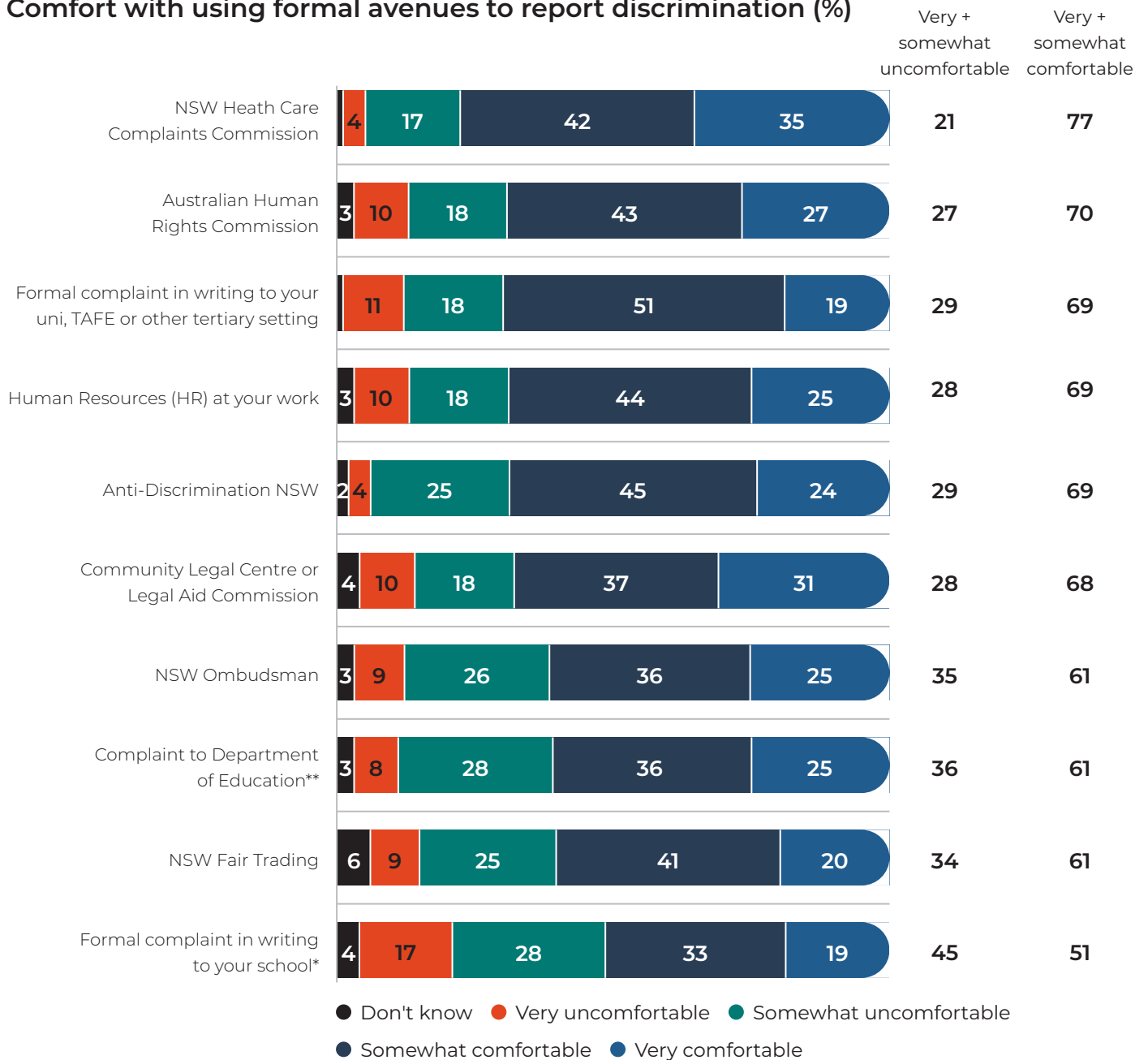
those who have experienced discrimination in the last 12 months (n=250), those who did not experience discrimination in the last 12 months (n=380)



### ■ Comfort with reporting discrimination

More than half of those who are aware of complaint avenues reported that they would feel comfortable using them. Some avenues were more polarising than others, with half saying they would be uncomfortable making a formal complaint to their school.

#### Comfort with using formal avenues to report discrimination (%)



Q. How comfortable would you be to use the following formal avenues to report discrimination if this was something you were experiencing?  
 Base: Participants who consented to questions on discrimination and aware of each avenue (n=45-176).

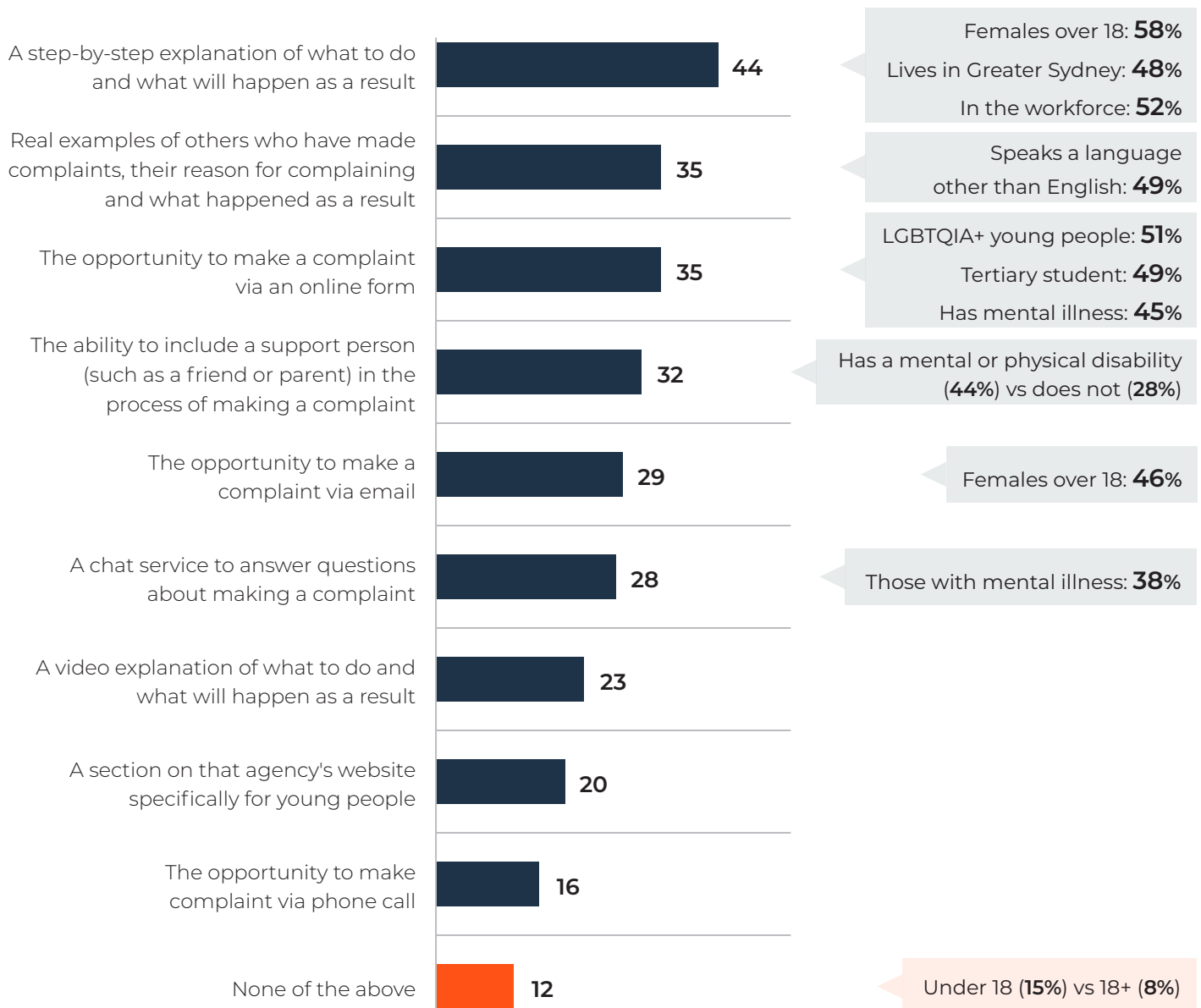
\*Only asked of those who attend TAFE or University. \*\*Only asked of those who attend primary school or high school.



### ■ Ways to encourage children and young people to make a formal complaint

Children and young people said that providing examples and information, explaining the process and next steps would encourage more young people to take action and make a formal complaint. A small proportion of young people under 18 (15%), said none of the ideas below would encourage them to make a formal complaint. Notably, making a phone call was the least popular option as a complaint mechanism.

### Which of the following would encourage you to make a formal complaint (%)



Q. Which of the following would encourage you to make a formal complaint if you had experienced discrimination?  
Base: Participants who consented to answer questions on discrimination (n=630)



## Case Study: Respect and Acceptance

### Empowering young people to advocate for respect and acceptance

A high number of children and young people reported experiencing discrimination in the past few years, with a large percentage of school aged children having reported it occurs at school, and young people aged between 18-24 reporting experiencing significant levels of discrimination in the community, online or at work. Many children and young people also reported being discriminated against based on their ethnic or racial identities.

#### 2168 Children's Parliament

2168 Children's Parliament empowers and facilitates children attending one of eleven primary schools in the 2168 postcode of Liverpool city to advocate for key issues they consider important to the primary school students. In 2023 they focused on children's experience of racism, delivering a series of speeches to Liverpool Council, and participated in a Department of Education anti-racism meeting. This was funded by the Australian Government under the Communities for Children program and delivered in partnership by Liverpool City Council and Mission Australia.

Student parliamentarians meet with politicians and community and policy representatives (called ambassadors), at Liverpool Council Chambers and petition them twice a year. Typically, in the first sitting of the Parliament, students will give their speeches, challenge ambassadors to develop solutions and then come back in November to report back on their advocacy efforts to the student parliamentarians. The student parliamentarians' speeches on how racism and bullying impacted them are based on several months of preparation, including workshops, consultations, and conducting a survey of over 500 students across 11 schools in the 2168 area. The student survey found that 24% directly experienced racism, and 49% of students reported seeing racism happen at their school. The survey also found that 48% of children from our schools don't talk about racism with their families, and another 41% of students surveyed haven't discussed racism with their friends.

In the first sitting for this year, one student parliamentarian asked the Liverpool Mayor and Councillors, Ambassadors, school principals, parents and teachers, "how will you help and change racism in our community?"

"No-one should be bullied or excluded because of their racial or ethnic background. Everyone has the right to speak up and be safe," another student told the Parliament.

As a result of their speeches to parliament in June 2023, the Department of Education Liverpool Network invited the student parliamentarians to share their experiences and insights of how to reduce racism, at an Anti-Racism Coordinator (ARCO) Network meeting.





# Case Study: Respect and Acceptance

## ■ 2168 Children's Parliament (cont.)

Their ideas included: educating children about racism, developing school plans to reduce racism, teaching students and teachers about the impacts of experiencing racism, learning how to listen and accept when children talk about their experience of racism, and holding regular workshops outside school and lessons within school on racism.

In November, speaking to Liverpool City Council, the ambassadors' panel and their school principals, one student parliamentarian asked, "will the Department of Education create programs addressing racism? Will the Council help create a friendlier place to live?"

The children and young people who participated said that this has increased their confidence and civic engagement.

"Being a member of the 2168 Children's Parliament gave myself and the rest of the Parliamentarians a voice, a say in making a change. It gave us the skills to raise awareness in our schools about bullying, racism, and equality," one parliamentarian told the UN Association of Australia.

In relation to 2168 Children's Parliament, Shaieste Heidari, Project Officer Stronger Children and Communities at Liverpool City Council said, "the children feel valued, they feel they're being heard, they have increased confidence to express emotions in a safe environment, in an environment where they're not being judged, they know there is no right or wrong answers, it's about exploring ideas in a safe environment."

The 2168 Children's Parliament have spearheaded a number of innovative activities and policies over the past five years including the provision of new canteens promoting healthy eating, the introduction of the school-based Breakfast Club Program, and improved promotion of the Active Kids' vouchers.

An independent evaluation conducted by Western Sydney University found that the 2168 Children's Parliament has enhanced collaboration between schools, encouraged cohesion and increased student leadership qualities.<sup>8</sup> The evaluation found that the 2168 Children's Parliament has also created a stronger understanding amongst students of democracy, government and civic participation, including knowledge of the democratic processes of local, state and federal levels of government, and the differences between policy and law.

<sup>8</sup> Third, A., Arora, V. & Moody, L. (2022). *2168 Stronger Children and Communities Project: Children's Parliament Evaluation*. Sydney: Young and Resilient Research Centre, Western Sydney University.

# 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. Commonly in 2023, children and young people wanted to see more support to help ease the cost of living, financial support provided for those in need, and more accessibility/support services made available.

Top 15 recommendations – 2023	Top 15 recommendations – 2022
1. Make the cost of living more affordable	Provide more youth-specific services and resources (e.g. life skills, financial literacy, art classes, physical activities)
2. Provide financial support/support for those in need	Provide more events/workshops/fun activities
3. Improve and increase support service	Provide more/better mental health support/resources
4. Make housing and rent more affordable	Provide financial support for young people/ those in need
5. Provide more recreational/entertainment facilities/playgrounds/parks	Make the cost of living more affordable
6. Provide better mental health support/more access to mental health resources	Provide more recreational/entertainment facilities/playgrounds/parks
7. Provide more events/workshops/fun activities	Focus more on bullying
8. More funding for education/improve school facilities	Improve the education system/improve the curriculum
9. Create more job opportunities for graduates/ more career opportunities	Provide free counselling/cover the cost of seeing a psychologist
10. Improve the education system/ improve curriculum	Make housing and rent more affordable
11. Provide educational support/more support for students at schools	Keep the community safe
12. Focus more on bullying issues/provide educational programs on bullying	Provide better education regarding sexual consent/ provide awareness about sex
13. Provide better transportation services	Provide courses/programs to help with career goals
14. Provide support in relation to taking care of the environment/addressing climate change	Create more job opportunities for young people
15. Keep the community safe	Provide educational support/more support for school students

*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)*



**GIVE US**  
more opportunities



**TAKE ACTION**  
against bullying  
and really try to

**PUT A STOP TO IT!**



**acyp.**



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

**Report:**

The NSW Strategic Plan for  
Children and Young People:  
Tracking Report 02

**Date:**

February 2024

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