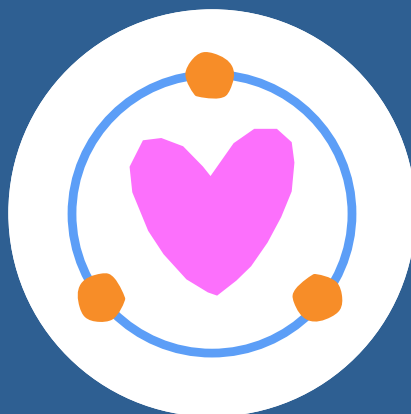
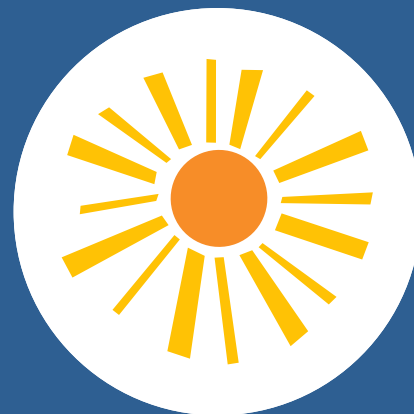


# acyp.

Office of the Advocate for  
Children & Young People

## The NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People

Tracking Report  
01



**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



When we launched the *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024* we made a commitment to release an annual tracking report, based on an annual poll of children and young people's experiences and perspectives against the six key focus areas of the Strategic Plan.

It is important to the Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People that we are transparent in our work and that we are accountable to children and young people.

We encourage the agencies, businesses, and communities we work with to do the same. Understanding what works, where positive changes are being made and how we are improving the lives of all children and young people enables us to move forward and ensure policies and practices reflect what children and young people need.

I appreciate the work of the ACYP team in producing this report. Data is powerful. When it is shared it is even more powerful.

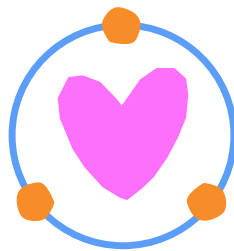
**Zöe Robinson**  
**Advocate for Children and Young People**

# Introduction

The Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP) is committed to building a future where all children and young people are given the opportunity to thrive and reach their fullest potential. The *NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2022-2024 (Strategic Plan)* includes six core commitment areas, based on what we have heard from children and young people across NSW:



Hope for the future



Love, connection  
and safety



Health and wellbeing



A good standard of living



Environments for  
joy and fun



Respect and acceptance

As part of measuring progress of the Strategic Plan, ACYP has committed to undertaking and publishing results from an annual quantitative survey that tracks the experiences and perceptions of children and young people in NSW across these six key areas. This tracking report outlines the key findings from our most recent 2022 survey and compares these with the 2021 benchmark results, which were included in the Strategic Plan.

ACYP has also committed to focus on two of the key areas each year. In 2022 the areas of focus were 'Health and Wellbeing' and 'Environments for Joy and Fun'. As a result, throughout the report you will see additional data deep dives into these two topics, as well as case studies to demonstrate examples of good practice across NSW.

## Methodology

Both the 2021 benchmark and the 2022 tracking survey 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
Sample size	n=815	n=1,005
Margin of error at 95% confidence interval	+/-3.4%	+/-3.1%
Fieldwork period	22 <sup>nd</sup> July – 10 <sup>th</sup> August	16 <sup>th</sup> September – 4 <sup>th</sup> October

ACYP acknowledges the limitations of this survey, in that it does not capture the views of younger children or children and young people with lower literacy skills.

However, ACYP has sought to ensure groups experiencing additional vulnerability were captured by the survey by ensuring it was circulated to 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 Research 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 2022 Youth Week survey and surveys conducted during the 2021 COVID-19 lockdown period. In these instances, the survey source has been identified beneath the relevant chart.

# Key Findings

Overall, in 2022 most key measures remained relatively stable with children and young people across NSW reporting largely positive scores across the six core commitment areas of the Strategic Plan.

The measure with the most positive scores relates to relationships with family and friends, whilst the most negative scores related to their mental health, level of respect they feel in their community and their physical health. The areas of greatest improvement over the past 12 months have been in children and young people's access to fun activities and their feeling about life these days. However, we note that sentiment about life these days remains relatively low compared to other measures. None of the over-arching measures saw significant declines over the past year, however, there are a number of key issues to monitor.

## ■ *Areas indicating improvement*

A year on from COVID-19 lockdowns, the tracking survey highlighted that children and young people in NSW are happier and much more positive about life. When rating how they felt about their life these days, 64% gave a positive rating of 7 or more out of 10 – a major increase from 39% during the 2021 lockdowns. Ratings of happiness have also increased significantly from last year, with around two-thirds (65%) now rating their current happiness as a 7 or more out of 10, up from 59% last year. However, mental health remains one of the biggest challenges children and young people face, as explored in greater detail below.

In the past twelve months, there has also been substantial improvement in children and young people's satisfaction with their ability to participate in fun activities. Since the first wave of fieldwork was conducted during the height of the 2021 COVID-19 lockdown in NSW, there have been significant increases in the satisfaction children and young people have in their ability to participate in fun activities (71%, rating this a 7+ out of 10, up from 62% the previous year). Satisfaction with the quality of fun activities has also improved (57%, up from 48%). However, there is a disparity in satisfaction with activities based on location. Those in regional NSW were significantly less likely than those in Greater Sydney to be satisfied with their ability to participate in fun activities (65% vs. 75%), the variety of fun activities to do (45% vs 61%) and the quality of fun activities (48% vs. 63%). A majority of children and young people also reported feeling safe in public situations – particularly at work, university, TAFE and college, with little change in the past year, though there has been a marginal decrease in the proportion of children and young people feeling safe at school.

On balance, children and young people remain optimistic about their ability to achieve their goals and their future in general. Consistent with baseline results, a majority of children and young people feel hopeful about their future. In 2022, three-quarters (74%) of children and young people said they felt hopeful about their ability to get the education and training they need to achieve their goals.

## ■ **Areas to monitor**

An area of concern in the tracking survey is poor scores for both physical and mental health. Whilst perceptions of both physical and mental health remained similar between 2021 and 2022, one in 10 rated their physical health as poor and one in five rated their mental health as poor. Self-reported ratings for mental health have improved marginally over the past year, however it continues to be a key area of concern for children and young people, receiving the lowest score across all the key measures. Throughout the tracking survey mental health was also cited as the number one issue facing children and young people, with one in three (32%) mentioning this unprompted. Children and young people also raised concerns about long waiting times to access healthcare services, particularly support services for mental health.

Financial insecurity is another key issue to monitor, with a third (32%) reporting at least some difficulty making ends meet in 2022, up from a quarter (25%) the previous year. This was more prevalent in regional areas with 40% of young people reporting some financial difficulty. Financial insecurity was also found to have negative flow-on effects across most other commitment indicators. For instance, those who are financially insecure were most likely to rate their mental health poorly (38%). Whilst a clear majority still reported having access to basic living necessities such as a safe place to sleep, enough clothing and access to services, there was a decline in the number of young people reporting being able to eat a healthy and balanced diet, particularly amongst young parents and those who are not working or studying.

Whilst children and young people continue to report relatively positive scores in terms of the quality of their relationships with family, friends and the people that they live with, there had been a slight decline in these scores over the past year.

The number of children and young people who felt they could confide in a friend has also decreased, down from 62% in 2021 to 56% in 2022.

Concerningly, the frequency of bullying has also increased since 2021; amongst those who reported being bullied in the past 12 months, 40% said they experienced bullying weekly, up from 23% in 2021.

Overall, in 2022 most children and young people reported being satisfied with the level of respect they are shown within higher education, work and their local community, however, there has been a slight decline in children and young people's satisfaction with the level of respect they experience in school. Prevalence of discrimination remained relatively stable across 2021 and 2022, with approximately one in three children and young people in NSW reporting having experienced discrimination in the past year. However, there has been an increase in the frequency of discrimination, with a quarter (24%) of those who have been discriminated against in the last 12 months reporting experiencing this at least weekly, up from one in five (19%) in 2021.

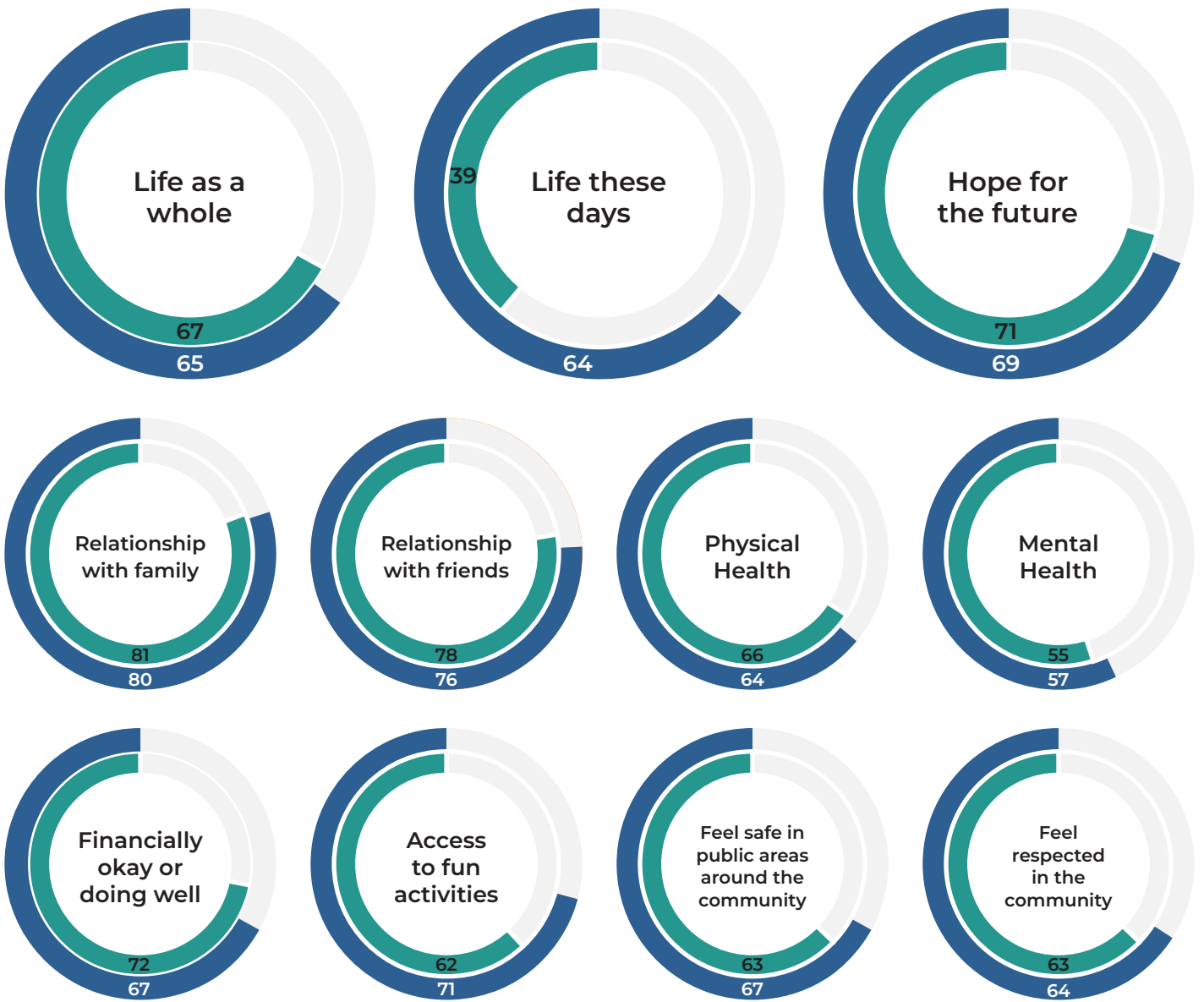
## ■ **Key principles and advice for government**

In 2022, we also asked children and young people a series of questions relating to the three overarching principles of the Strategic Plan – voice, rights and access. While around half feel government programs and initiatives are accessible, only a third feel the government considers their rights, and around a quarter feel the government listens to people their age.

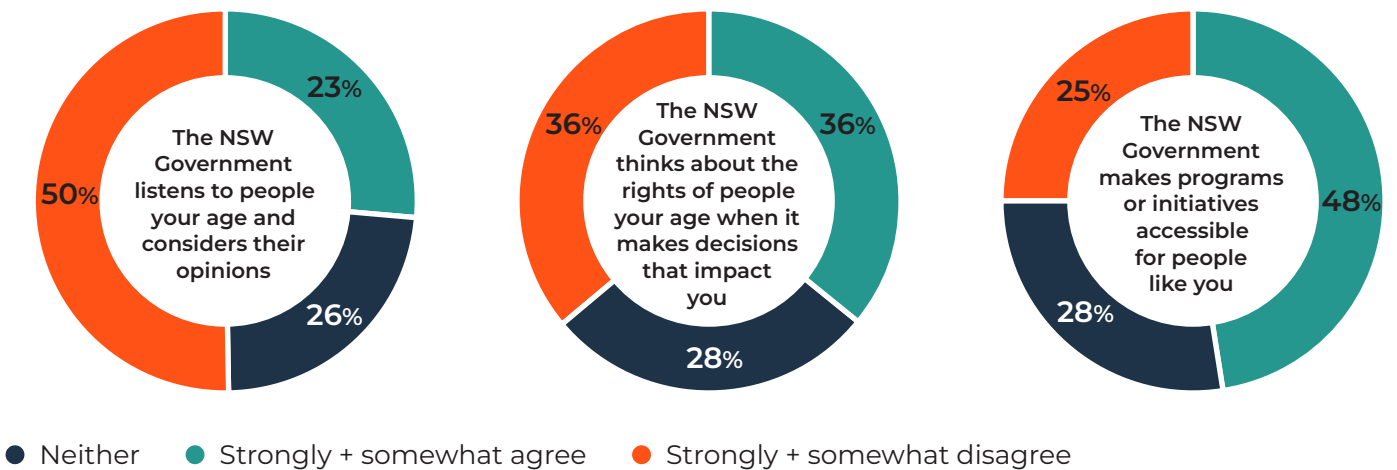
When asked what the NSW Government could do to make life better for children and young people, common responses included more access to mental health support, more fun activities or events, and financial support to alleviate cost of living pressures.

## Findings snapshot

% rating 7+/10 ● 2021 ● 2022



## Principles of the Strategic Plan – 2022





## What matters to children and young people

The main issues children and young people said people their age faced in 2022 were:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  01. Mental health and emotional wellbeing            |  06. Education, school, or home schooling |
|  02. Financial instability and high cost of living    |  07. Bullying                             |
|  03. Pressure to meet societal expectations or trends |  08. Social media                         |
|  04. Social wellbeing or quality of life              |  09. Unemployment or access to jobs       |
|  05. Affordable housing                             |  10. Drug and alcohol abuse             |

**“** Mental health is a big factor in young people nowadays due to increased isolation and reduced social interactions due to technology and the ripple effects of COVID.

*Mental health, it's a very, very big part of our lives, and the connection we have with social media definitely doesn't help. It can be very easy to do nothing all day and get sucked into your screen.*

*Cost of living – it feels like we will forever be renting and unable to afford a house, and are having to constantly sacrifice one essential over another.*

*During high school and after high school, often people are lost in life and don't know what to do or haven't thought about what to do. There are high expectations from parents and others, but a lot of the time, it's suffocating.*

**”**

**“** Provide better funded services. Allowances never cover cost of living, forcing tertiary students to sacrifice their degree to fund their cost of living.

*Provide more funding into mental health and make it easier to access, make it less financially taxing on them so they don't feel the guilt of going to a psychologist.*

*Give more help to the youth. Especially people who are dealing with mental health issues and getting bullied.*

*Hold activities, events and programs for young people and actively promote them. Programs that help educate us about the topics covered in this survey while also making it interactive and interesting. I would also enjoy / like to see programs that cater to ethnic groups especially in the Western Sydney area.*

**”**

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

- 1 Provide more youth-specific services and resources
- 2 Provide more events, workshops and fun activities
- 3 Provide more and better mental health support
- 4 Provide financial support for young people and those in need
- 5 Make the cost of living more affordable
- 6 Provide more recreational or entertainment facilities, playgrounds and parks
- 7 Focus more on bullying
- 8 Improve the education system or improve the curriculum
- 9 Provide free counselling or cover the costs of psychologists
- 10 Invest in affordable housing and affordable rent
- 11 Keep the community safe
- 12 Provide better education regarding sexual consent
- 13 Provide courses and programs to help with career goals
- 14 Create more job opportunities for young people
- 15 Provide educational support and more support for school students

## In the voices of children and young people



*I think a rent freeze for those renting under the age of 30 would be so good.*

*We are paying way too much rent with nothing to help us. In my case, I have to work 3 jobs with full-time uni in order to make ends meet, I'm not sure how other people are doing it.*

*A safer place in our community in general. Not being scared to walk at night. Feeling safe at night. Teaching P-platers not to speed and be more aware out there.*

*Continue to support disadvantaged young people to thrive in their chosen futures.*

*Have teachers talk about careers where university isn't necessary. Teachers seem to only talk about university, but all as I see is HECS debt and stress.*

*More access to mental health and support services especially in regional towns.*

*I don't know what can be done. There will always be bullying at school. And people that pick on other kids because they look different or appear to be different.*

*More fun activities to do on the weekend, to give us a break from all our school work.*

*Help improve conditions for the future as not everyone is born with the support of family. Guides for those who are unsure on what to do and career paths that they can take that have progressive steps.*

*Subsidise living costs for young people who are working or trying to work. Living is expensive, even if working full-time. Young people don't always get paid well.*

*Teach more about diversity and consent in everyday and sexual situations.*

*Easier access to bulk-billed / reduced fees for mental health professionals as currently the appointment wait time is approximately 6-12 months, and the cost for private is above \$100.*

*24-hour public transport to make getting home safer and accessible.*

*Support groups in schools for bullying. For teachers to have a serious approach to bullying on school grounds. Students who are bullied feel there is no help.*

*Have more events or options to allow young people to participate in fun activities like sports, or art classes that don't require money.*



# 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 the 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.**

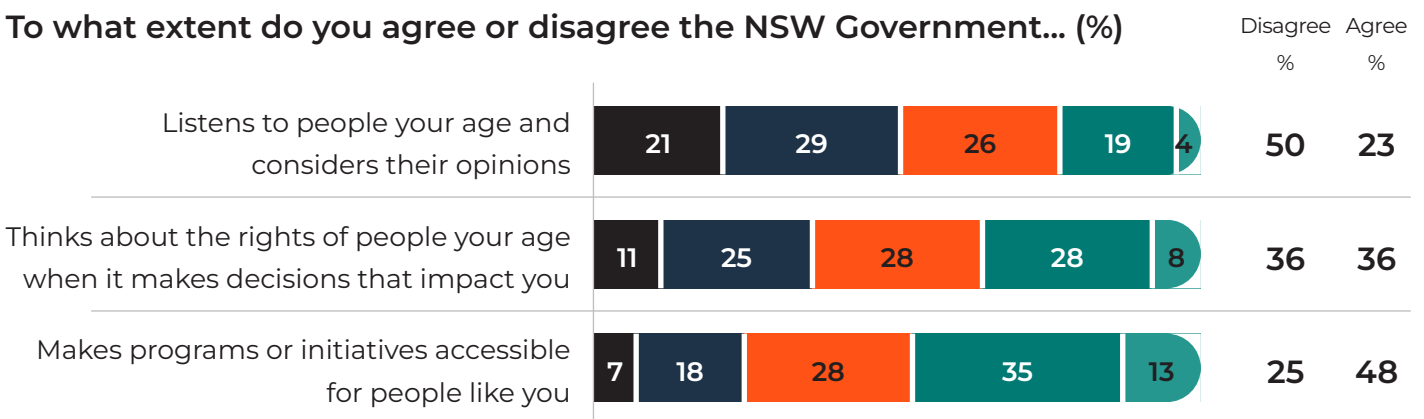
## Access

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

ACYP's 2022 Youth Week survey asked children and young people to rate the NSW Government on its performance against these three principles.

While around half of children and young people agreed NSW Government programs and initiatives are accessible to them, only around a third felt their rights were considered, and a quarter felt their voices and opinions were heard.

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



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

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

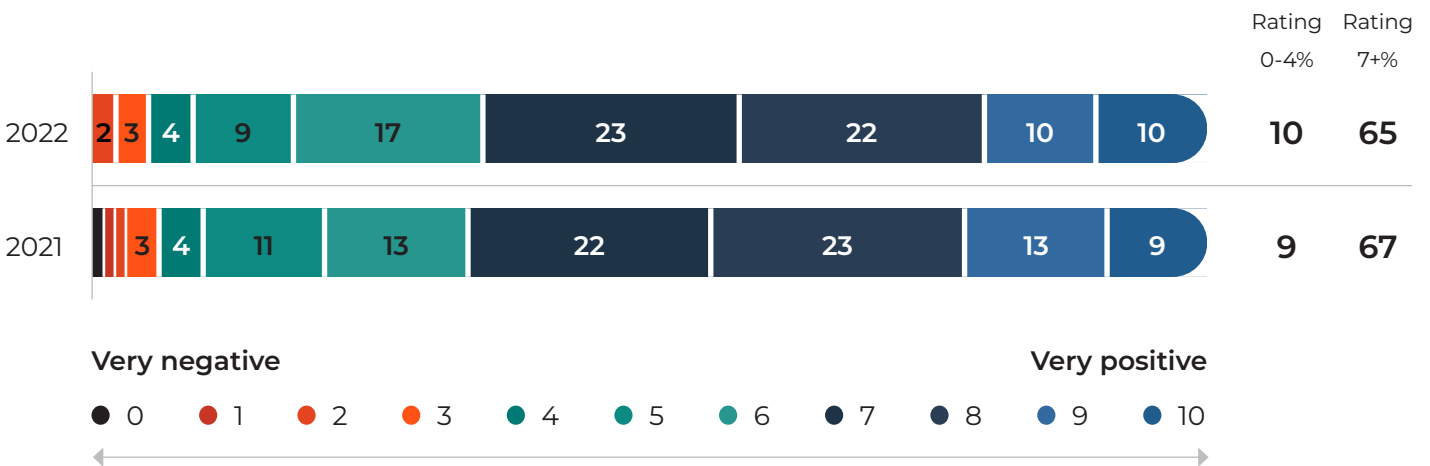
Source: ACYP Youth Week 2022, Survey Base: n=1,000 children and young people aged 10-24 years. Fieldwork ran 14-16 April 2022

There are several cohorts who feel the NSW Government is failing to consider them across all three of the above metrics in that they were statistically more likely to disagree with each statement<sup>1</sup>, including: those with a mental health condition; LGBTQIA+ young people, those in Regional NSW and students enrolled in tertiary education.

## Sentiment about life

In the benchmark survey, children and young people were asked to rate their feelings about life as a whole. During the 2021 COVID-19 lockdowns, ACYP began also asking how children and young people were feeling about 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 of the survey.

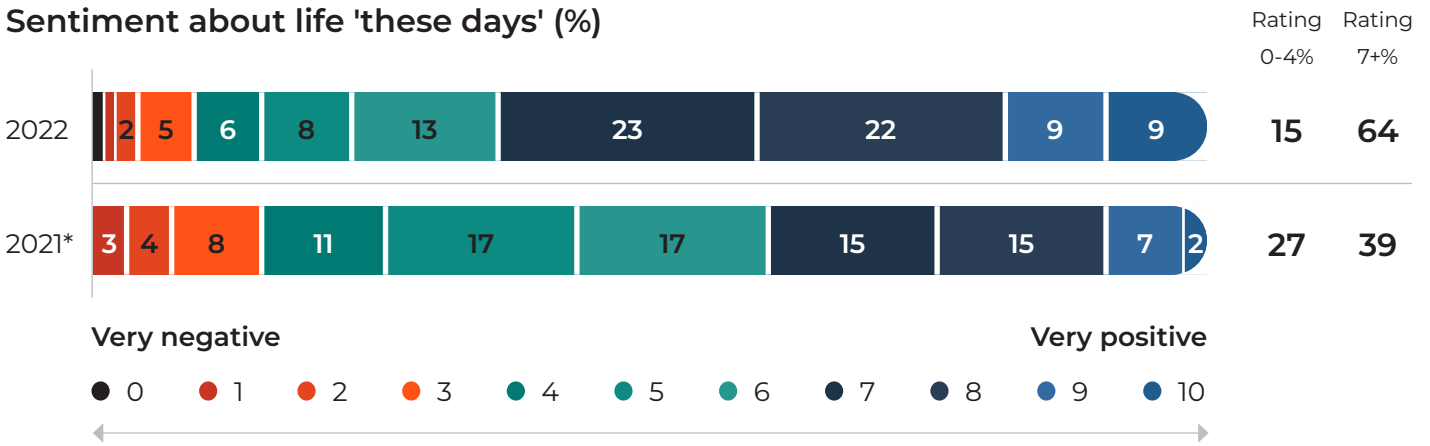
### Sentiment about life as a whole (%)



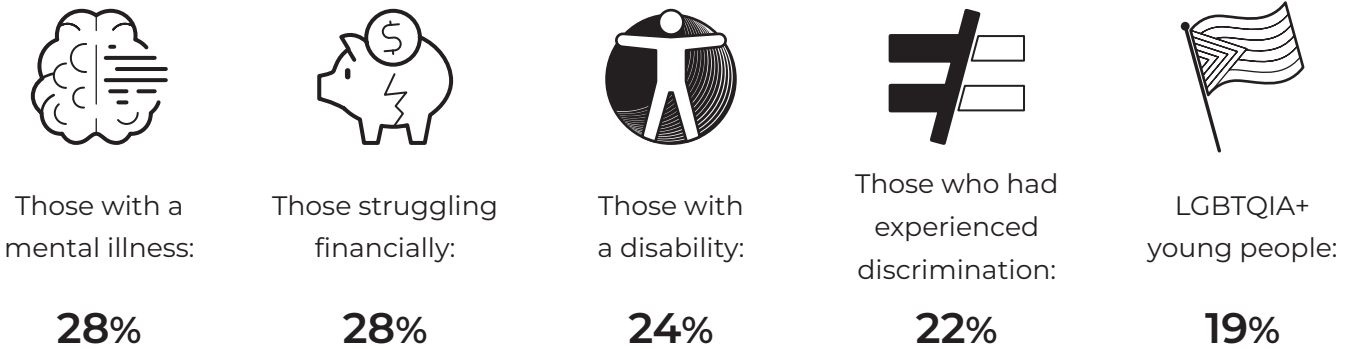
<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report, where we have highlighted particular cohorts as being more or less positive about a given measure, we have only included groups with statistically significant results.

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.

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



### Those more likely to feel negative about life 'these days' in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)



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, 2022 (n=1,005)

\*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 for children and young people 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.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has diminished in prominence as restrictions and lockdowns have eased, mental health, finances, relationships, education and work remain dominant concerns for children and young people across NSW.

	Top 10 issues 2022	Top 10 issues 2021
1.	Mental health and emotional well-being (anxiety, stress, depression, etc.)	Mental health and emotional well-being (anxiety, stress, depression, etc.)
2.	Financial instability and high cost of living	COVID-19 pandemic
3.	Pressure to meet societal expectations or trends	Education, school or home-schooling
4.	Social wellbeing or quality of life	COVID-19 restrictions, lockdown and isolation
5.	Affordable housing	Unemployment or access to jobs
6.	Education, school or home-schooling	Affordable housing
7.	Bullying	Social media, online bullying or cyber threats
8.	Social media	Social wellbeing or quality of life
9.	Unemployment or access to jobs	Financial instability and high cost of living
10.	Drug and alcohol abuse	Bullying

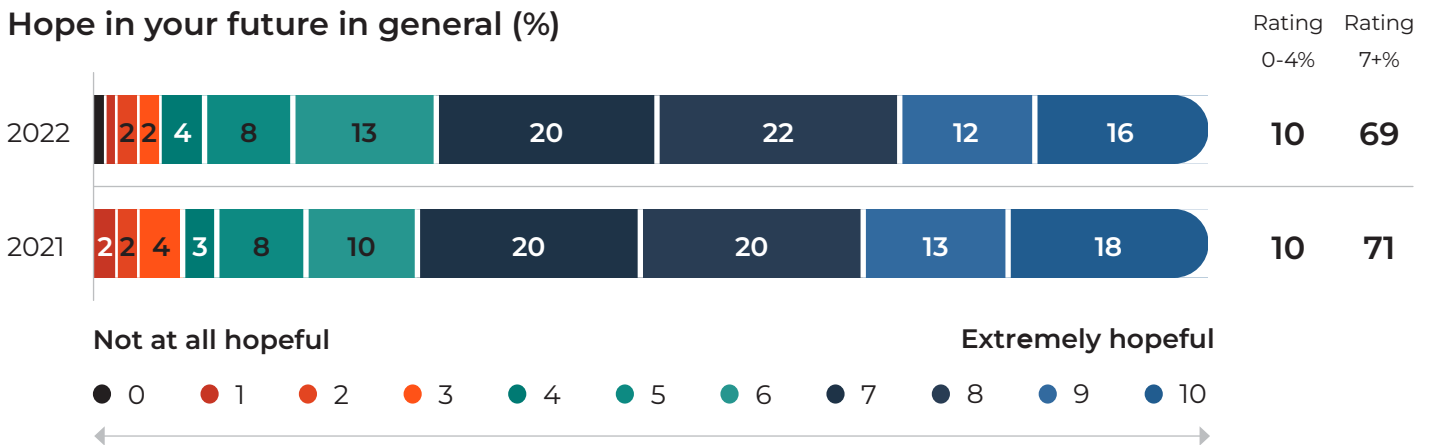


# 01. Hope for the Future

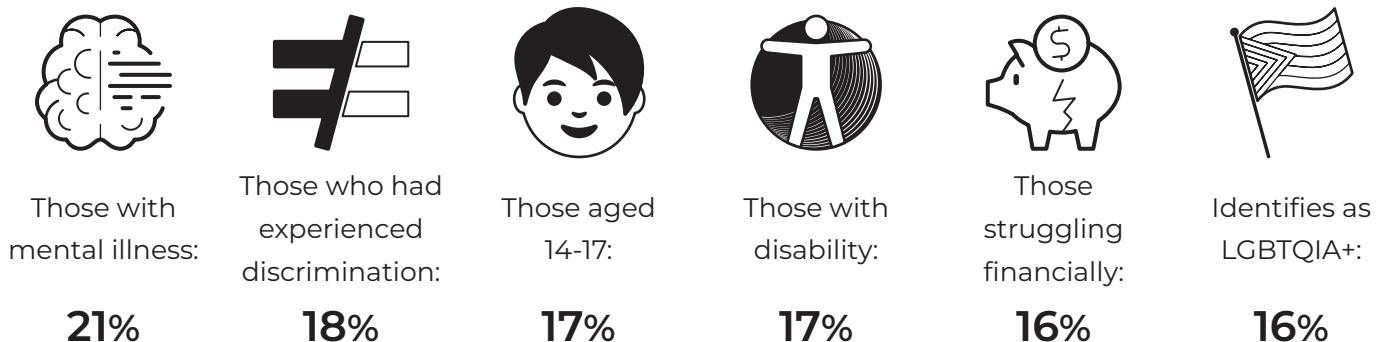
*Children and young people's individual learning and interests are fostered through education, training and skills development which supports them to grow and prepares them for their future. They are supported to be independent, engage in society and to join the workforce.*

While on balance, most children and young people remain optimistic about their future, there have been some slight declines since 2021 when it comes to feeling hopeful about their future in general and their ability to get a job in their preferred field.

## Hope in your future in general (%)



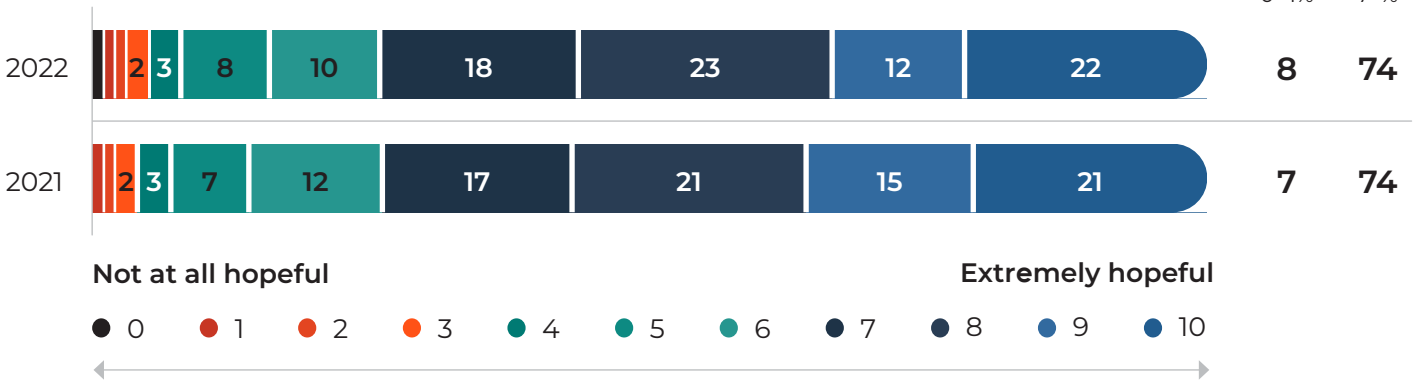
## Those less likely to feel hopeful in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)



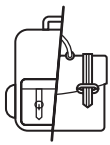


### Hope in your ability to get the education and training you need to achieve your goals (%)

Rating 0-4%    Rating 7+%



### Those less likely to feel hopeful in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)



Those not currently working or studying:

**30%**



Those struggling financially:

**16%**



Those with mental illness:

**14%**



Those with disability:

**13%**



Those who had experienced discrimination:

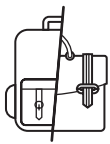
**13%**

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

Rating 0-4%    Rating 7+%



### Those less likely to feel hopeful in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)



Those not currently working or studying:

**41%**



Those with mental illness:

**24%**



Those who had experienced discrimination:

**23%**



Those with disability:

**23%**



Those struggling financially:

**23%**

Q. How hopeful do you feel about...? Base: All participants, 2022 (n=1,005); 2021 (n= 814).

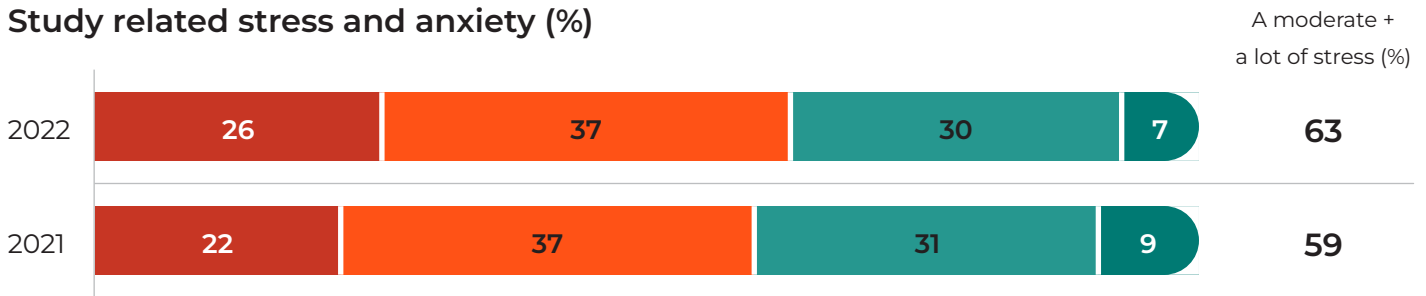




## Study-related stress and anxiety

Among current school students, levels of study-related stress and anxiety have increased slightly from the benchmark study and remain at a high level with almost two-thirds experiencing at least a moderate level of anxiety.

### Study related stress and anxiety (%)



- I experience a lot of anxiety or stress
- I experience a moderate amount of stress or anxiety
- I experience very little stress or anxiety
- I do not experience any stress or anxiety

### Those more likely to feel a lot or a moderate amount of study stress or anxiety in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)



Those with mental illness:

**93%**



Those with disability:

**83%**



Those who had experienced discrimination:

**81%**



Identifies as LGBTQIA+:

**80%**



Those also working:

**78%**



Females:

**71%**

Q. To what extent do you experience stress or anxiety related to school / your studies?

Base: All school students 2022 (n=517); 2021 (n=637).



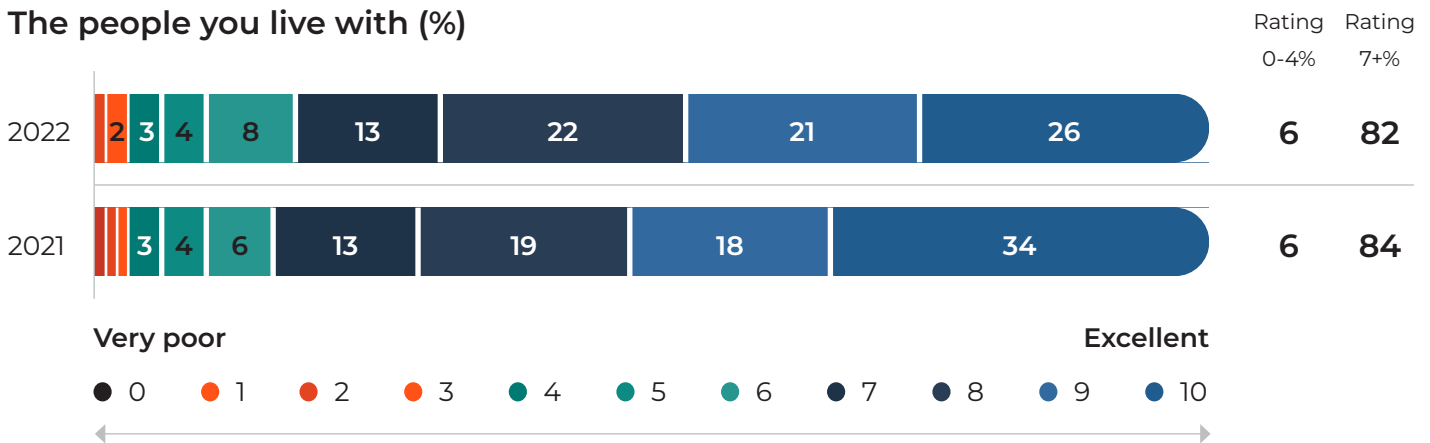
# 02. Love, Connection and Safety

*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

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 with a mental illness were more likely to rate all their relationships poorly.

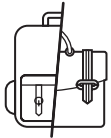
### The people you live with (%)





While the number of children and young people rating the quality of their relationship with the people they live with as 7+/10 has only dipped slightly since 2021, the majority of this change is seen at the higher end of the scale, with fewer children and young people giving a rating these relationships as excellent (10/10).

**Those more likely to report poor relationships with those they live with in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)**



Those not working or studying:

24%



Recent refugee or migrant:

17%



Those struggling financially:

15%



Those with mental illness:

11%



Lives with one parent / one parent at a time:

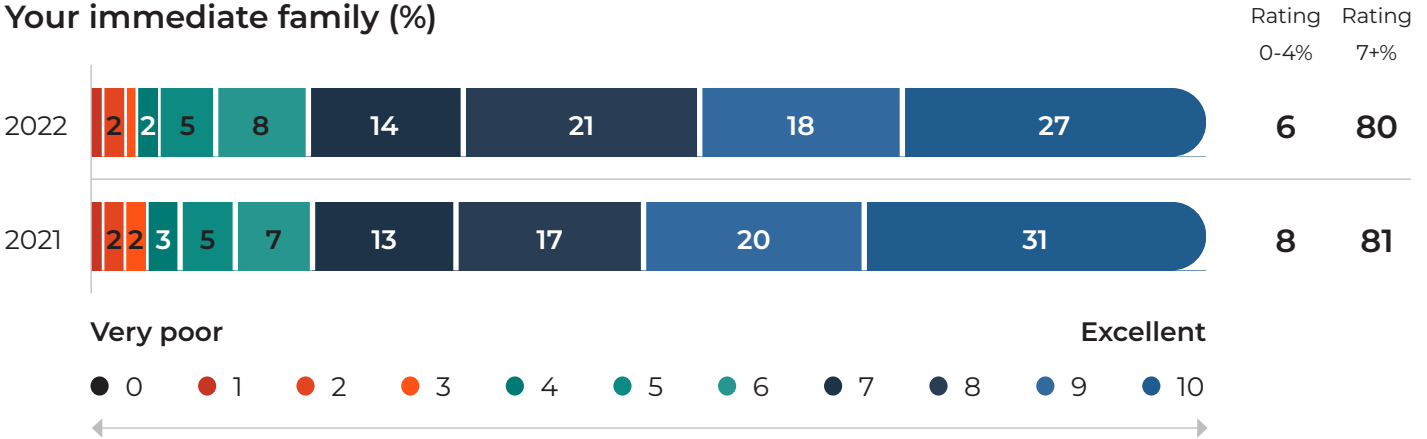
10%



Those with disability:

10%

**Your immediate family (%)**



**Those more likely to report poor relationships with their immediate family in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)**



Young parents:

16%



Those struggling financially:

16%



Those with mental illness:

13%



Lives with partner or spouse:

12%

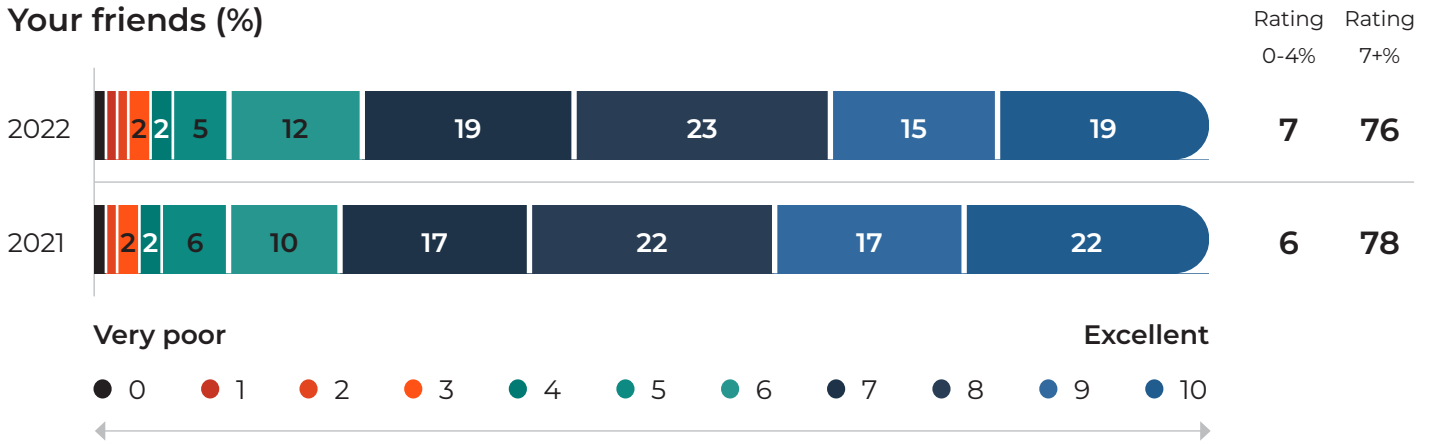


Those with disability:

12%



### Your friends (%)



### Those more likely to report poor relationships with their friends in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)



Young parent:  
**20%**



Recent refugee or migrant:  
**18%**



TAFE / VET students:  
**18%**



Those with mental illness:  
**13%**

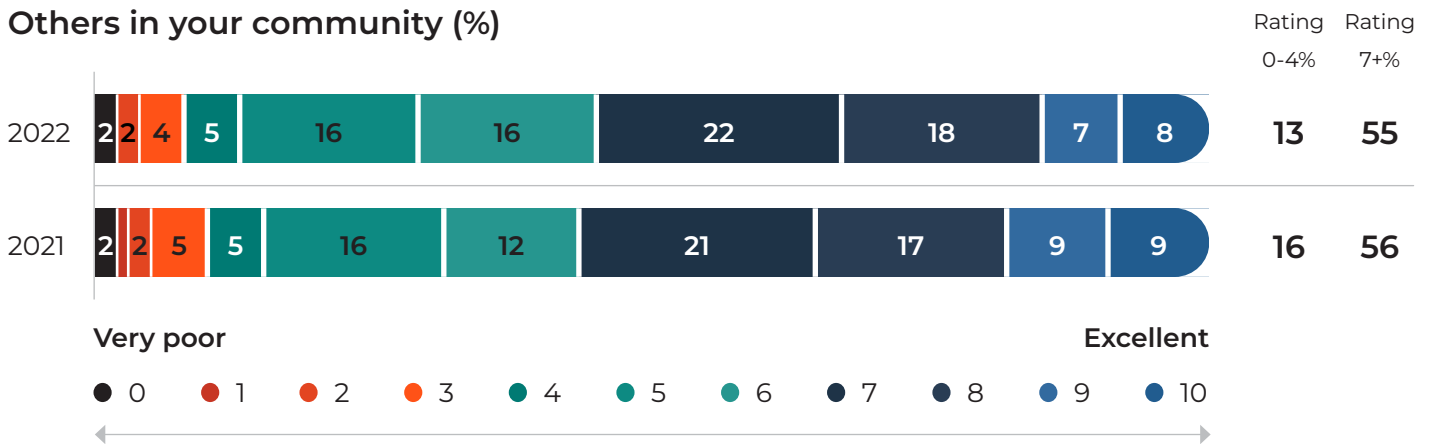


Lives with partner/spouse:  
**12%**



Those with disability:  
**11%**

### Others in your community (%)



### Those more likely to report a poor relationship with others in their community in 2022 (0-4)



TAFE / VET students:  
**36%**



Those with mental illness:  
**24%**



Those who had experienced discrimination:  
**21%**



Those with disability:  
**21%**



Identifies as LGBTQIA+:  
**17%**

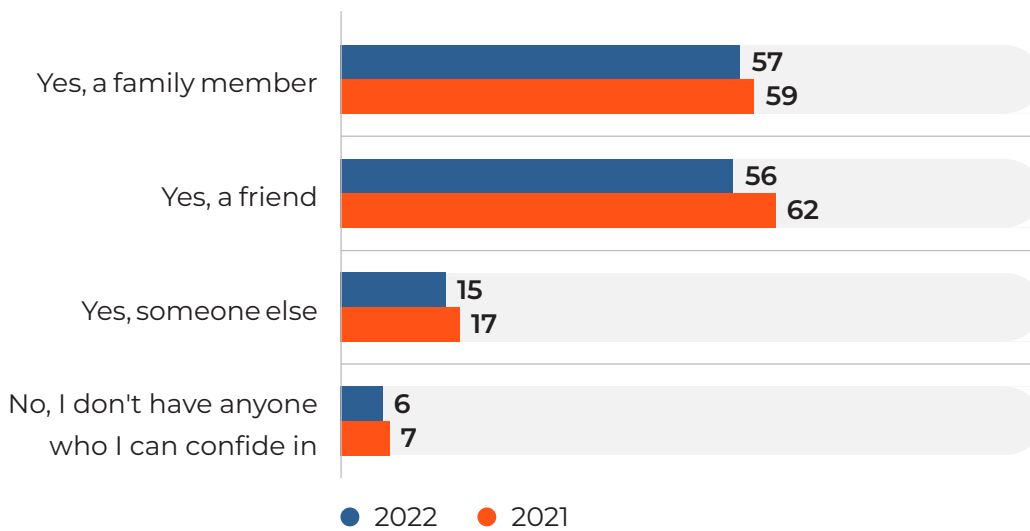
How would you rate the quality of your relationship with...? Base: All participants, those who live alone were not asked about the relationship with those they live with. 2022 (n=966 - 1005);2021 (n=771 - 815)



## Someone to confide in

In 2022, 94% of children and young people felt they could confide in someone, consistent with 93% in 2021. However, the number of children and young people who felt they could confide in a friend has decreased slightly, from 62% to 56%.

Who young people feel they can confide in:



Those most likely to say they had no-one to confide in were males aged 18-24 (10%).

## Experiences of bullying

### Prevalence

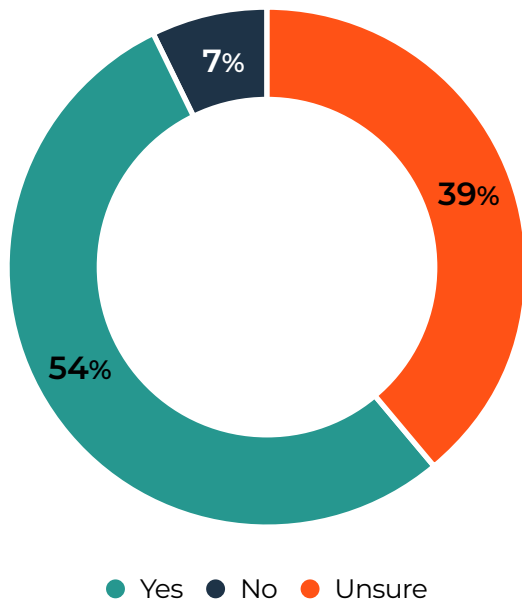
In 2022, more than one in three children and young people had experienced bullying in the past 12 months, roughly on par with a different measure from 2021. However, it was much more prevalent among certain cohorts – with more than 50% of children and young people in those groups having experienced bullying.

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

Base: All participants 2022 (n=1,005); 2021 (n=815).



### Experienced bullying in the prior 12 months – 2022 (%)

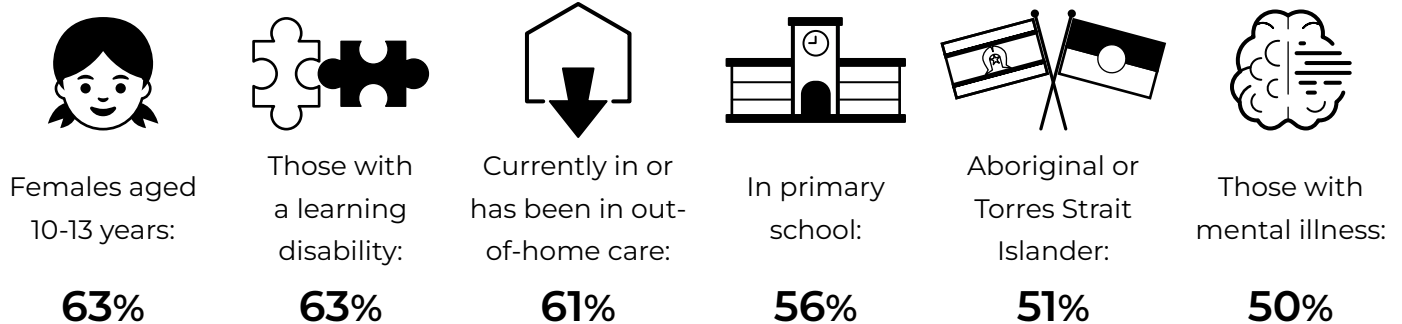


In 2021, **36%** of children and young people indicated they had experienced bullying in the prior 12 months.

We note this figure cannot be compared directly to 2022 data, as this figure was derived from a question about the location of bullying. This represents the percentage of participants who had experienced bullying in any location over the prior 12 months\*.

*\*2021 Q. In the past 12 months, have you personally experienced bullying in any of the following places? Question set included options 'no' and 'not sure'. Base: All participants who agreed to consented to answer questions on bullying (n=687)*

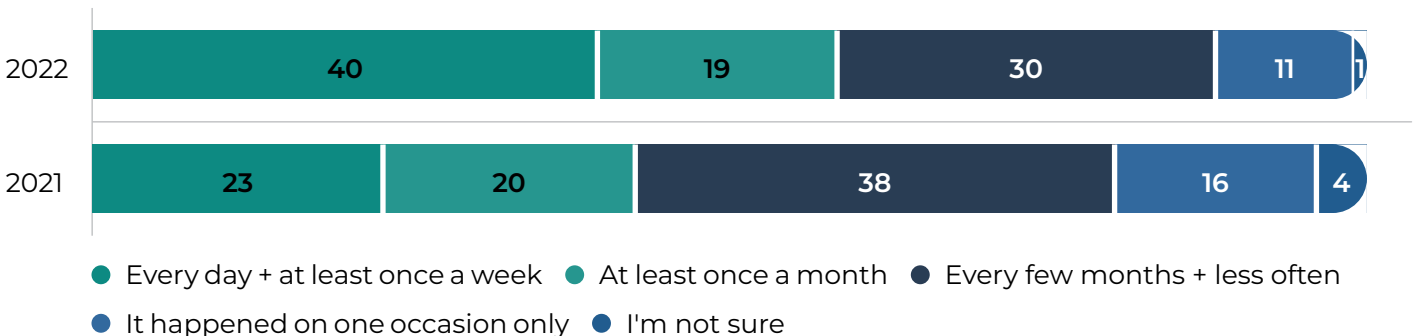
### Those more likely to have experienced bullying in 2022



### Frequency

Among those who had been bullied in the past 12 months, 40% experienced bullying weekly. This has increased since 2021 at 23%.

### Frequency of bullying (%)



Q. How often have you experienced bullying over the past 12 months? Base: those who have experienced bullying 2022 (n=265); 2021 (n=237).



While not a measure that can be determined from this data, ACYP heard qualitative responses from students in 2021 about the return to school after lockdown, which indicated some students felt anxious about their return to situations where they experienced bullying. This may be a factor in this reported increased frequency and prevalence of bullying.

### Focus

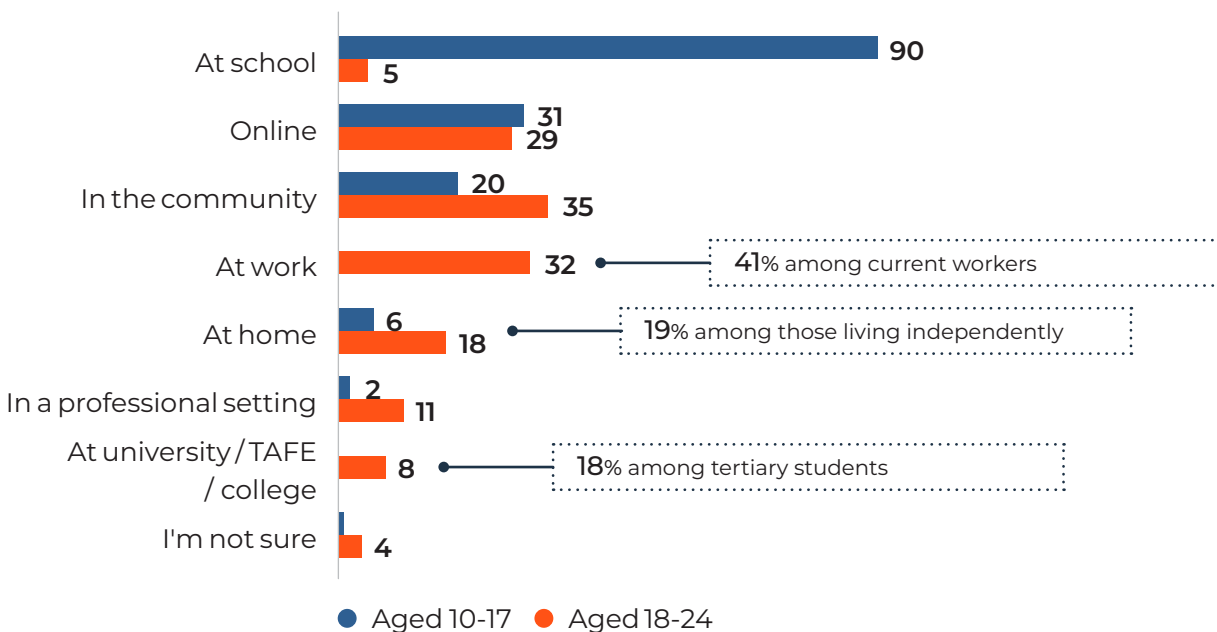
Children and young people said they were most likely to be bullied about their appearance or weight (40%), and social status or popularity (29%), followed by their interests or hobbies (20%) and how much money they or their family has (16%).

Across all demographic groups, appearance or weight was a more frequent focus of the bullying, with the exception of those with a culturally and linguistically diverse background, where 29% said their ethnic or cultural background or skin colour, and 28% said appearance or weight. In addition, those who said they felt financially secure more frequently said it was related to their social status or popularity (31%).

### 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 (41%). Among those aged 18-24, the most likely locations for bullying were in the community, at work or online.

### Where bullying occurred – 2022 (%)



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, 2022 (n=265); 2021 (n=237)

Q. In the past 12 months, in which places or situations have you personally experienced bullying? Base: Those who had experienced bullying, 2022: n=274, 2021: n=237



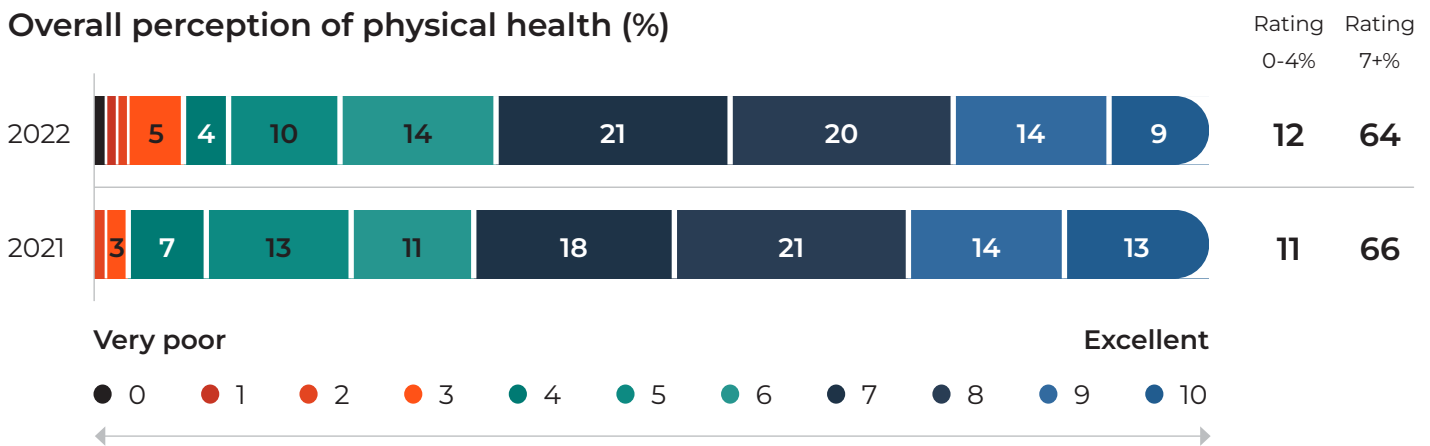
# 03. Health and Wellbeing

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

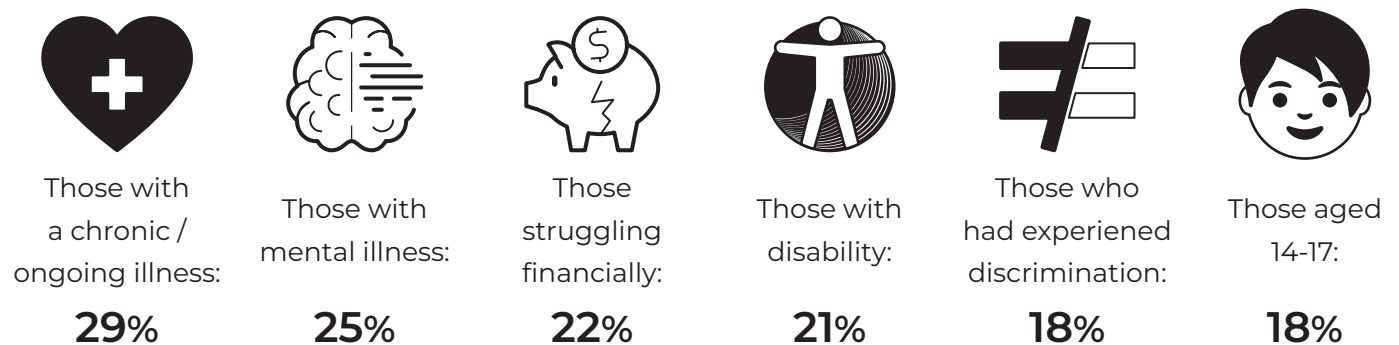
## Self-rated physical and mental health

Perceptions of both physical and mental health remain similar between 2021 and 2022; roughly one in five rated their mental health as poor, and one in 10 rated their physical health as poor.

### Overall perception of physical health (%)

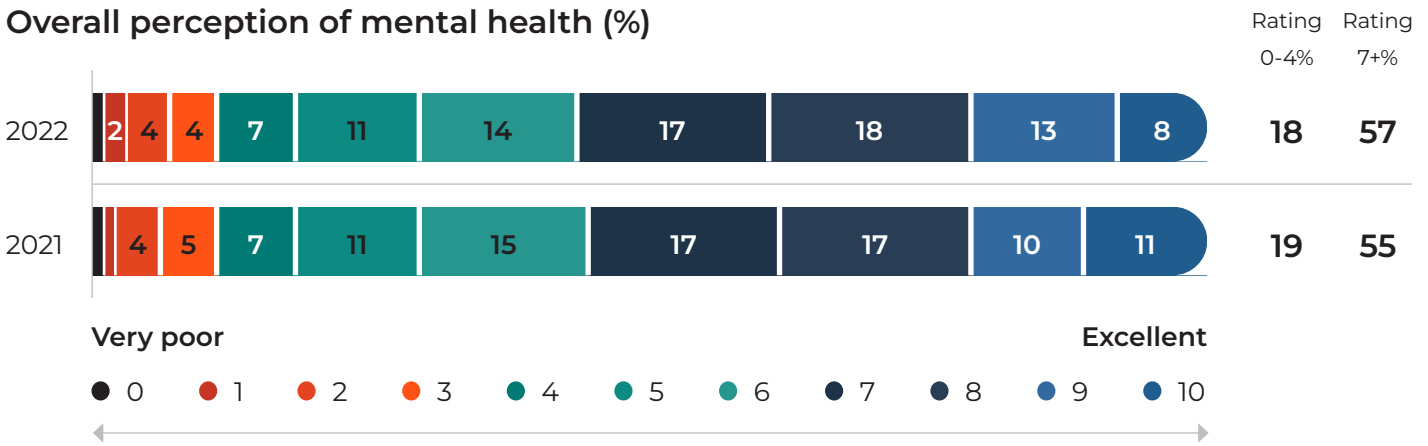


### Those more likely to feel that their physical health is poor in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)

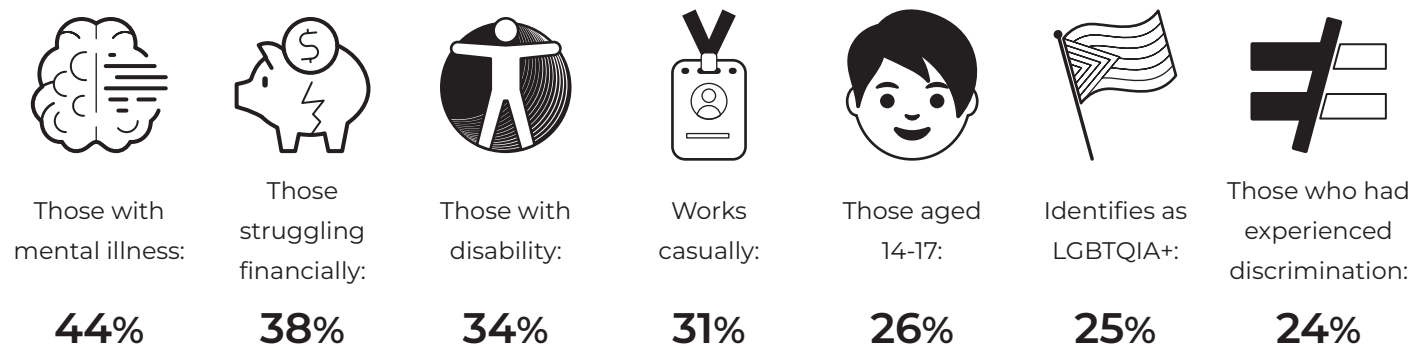




### Overall perception of mental health (%)



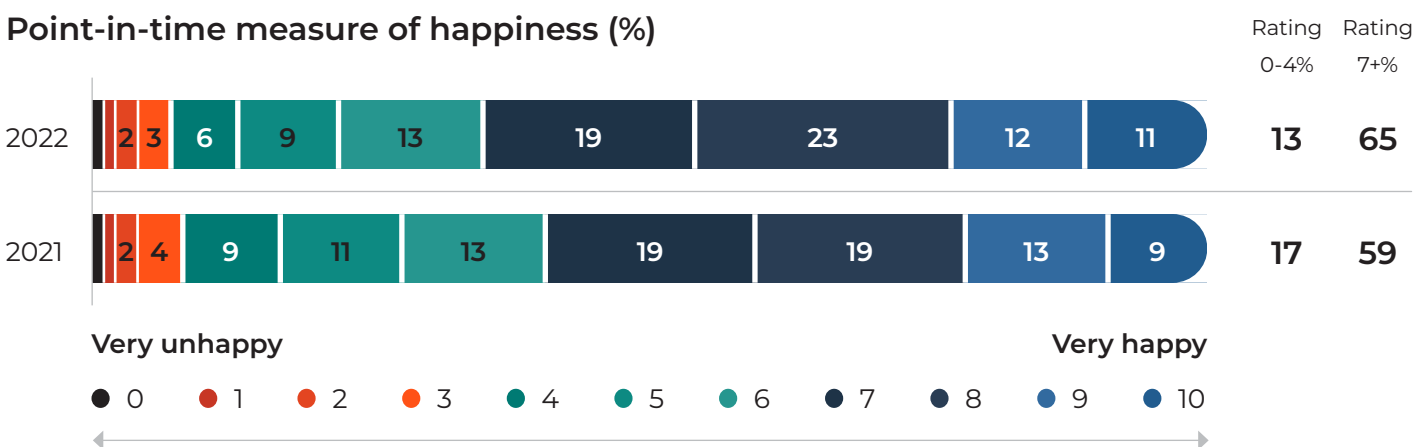
### Those more likely to feel that their mental health is poor in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)



## Self-rated happiness, anxiety and resilience

Ratings of happiness have increased significantly from last year, with two-thirds of children and young people now rating their current happiness levels as a 7 or more out of 10.

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



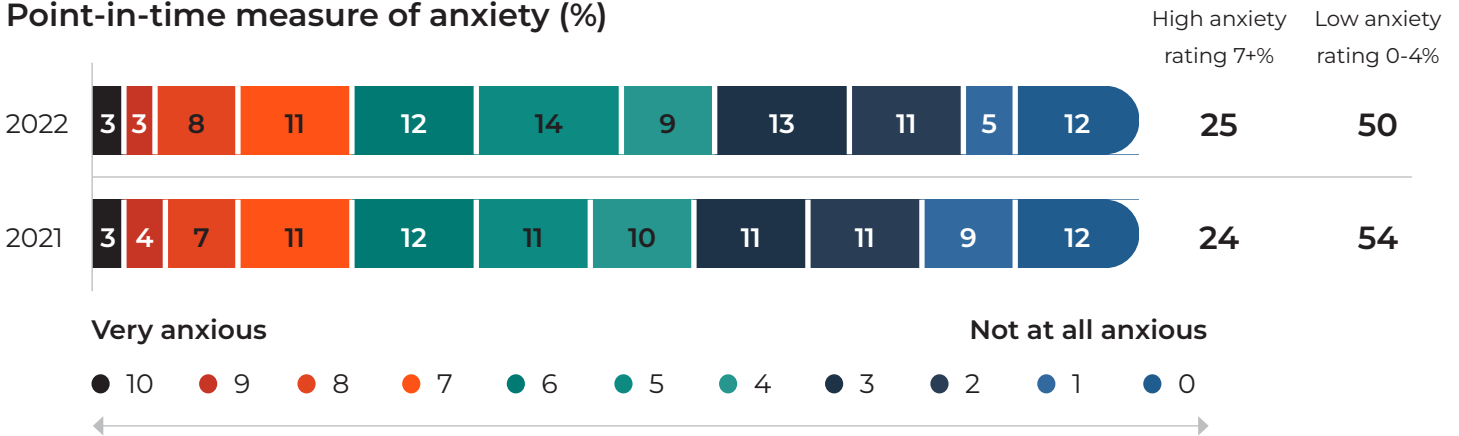
Q. How would you rate your overall physical and mental health? Base: All participants, 2022 (n=1,005); 2021 (n=815).

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

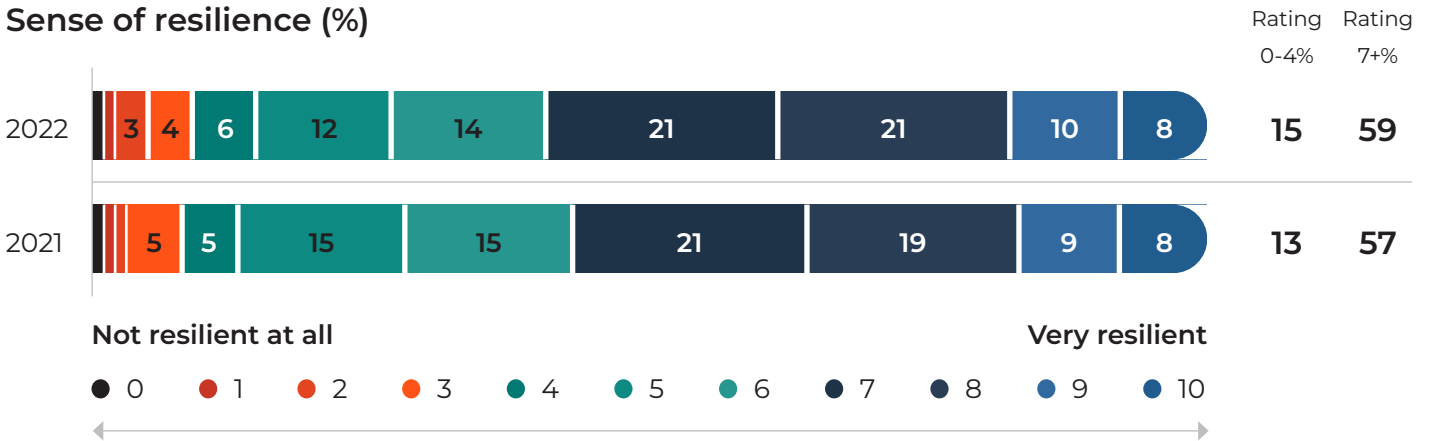
Happiness was highest among those aged 10-17, with 72% rating 7+/10. ACYP notes that while children and young people aged 10-17 reported positive scores for happiness at this point-in-time measure, broader, ongoing concerns about their mental health should not be dismissed.

Feelings of anxiety and resilience have remained fairly stable over the past year, though the proportion of children and young people saying they did not feel anxious on the day of the survey has decreased slightly.

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



### Sense of resilience (%)



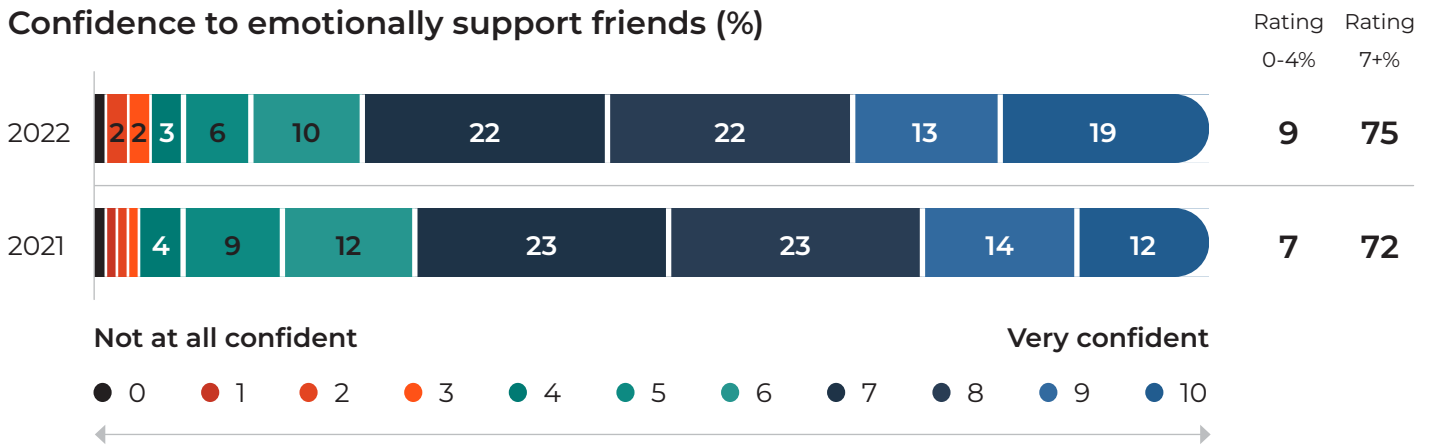
Q. Overall, how anxious do you feel today? Base: All participants, 2022 (n=1,005); 2021 (n=815).

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

## Confidence to provide peer support

Most children and young people feel fairly confident to provide emotional support to their friends, with little change over the past year – seeing only a marginal increase from 72% to 75%.

### Confidence to emotionally support friends (%)



## Health and wellbeing in focus

During the first year of the Strategic Plan, ACYP focused on two of the commitments in more detail – Health and Wellbeing and Environments for Joy and Fun. This means we have sought out opportunities to highlight the needs of children and young people when it comes to those two commitment areas, and have, where possible, asked additional questions about these commitments when engaging with children and young people.

The questions on the next page were added to the Strategic Plan 2022 tracking survey to explore what it looks like to wait for an appointment with a mental health professional. Waiting times are consistently raised as a key concern for children and young people when it comes to healthcare – particularly for their mental health.

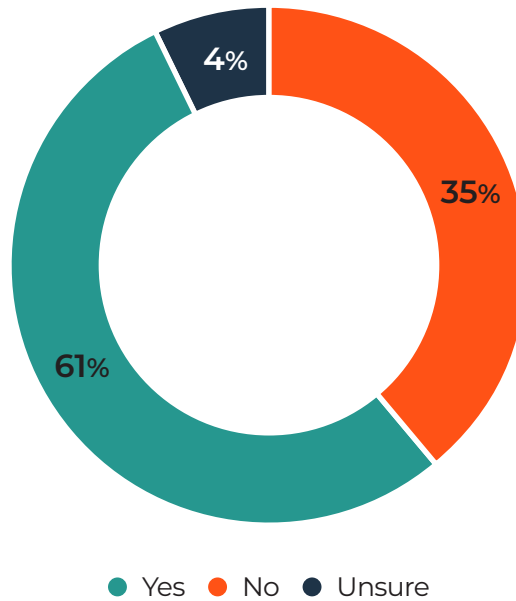
Q. How confident do you feel in your ability to support your friends with their mental and emotional wellbeing?

Base: All participants, 2022 (n=1,005); 2021 (n=815).

## ■ Seeking support for mental health

More than a third of children and young people surveyed sought support for their mental health in one form or another.

Sought mental health support in the past 12 months (%)



### Those more likely to have sought mental health support in 2022...

Females	45%
Lives with their partner or spouse	46%
Identifies as LGBTQIA+	56%
Has a chronic / ongoing illness	65%
Has a mental illness	70%
Has autism	54%
Has ADHD	49%

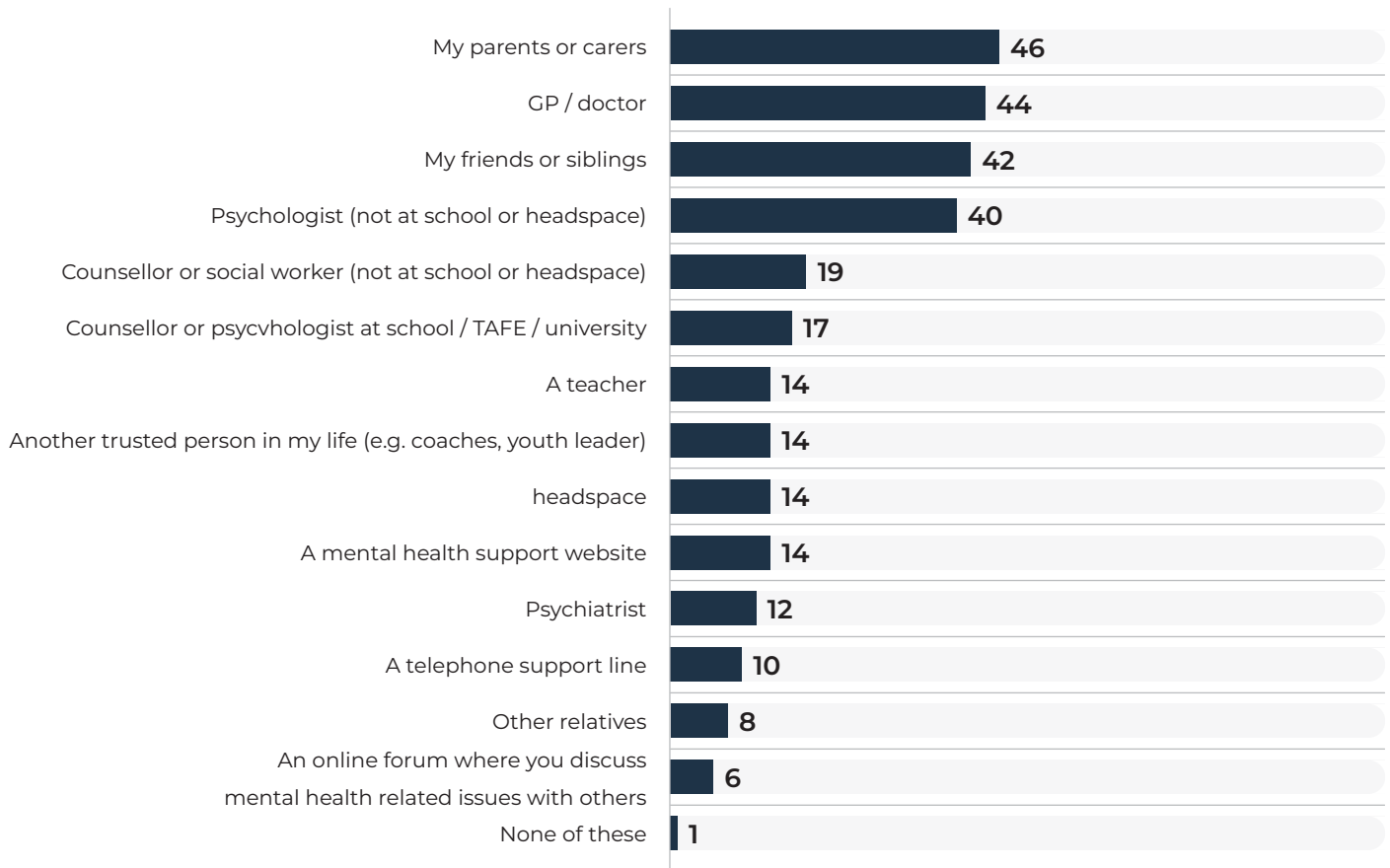
### Those less likely to have sought mental health support in 2022...

Males	71%
Of CALD background	75%
Arrived in Australia in the last 5 years as a refugee or migrant	83%

## ■ Main sources of support

Many sought support from parents and friends, though many also sought support from health professionals. GPs were most common, followed by psychologists who were not located within a school or headspace facility. We note the prevalence of GPs may be due to the requirement to seek a referral for other specialist healthcare such as psychologists and psychiatrists.

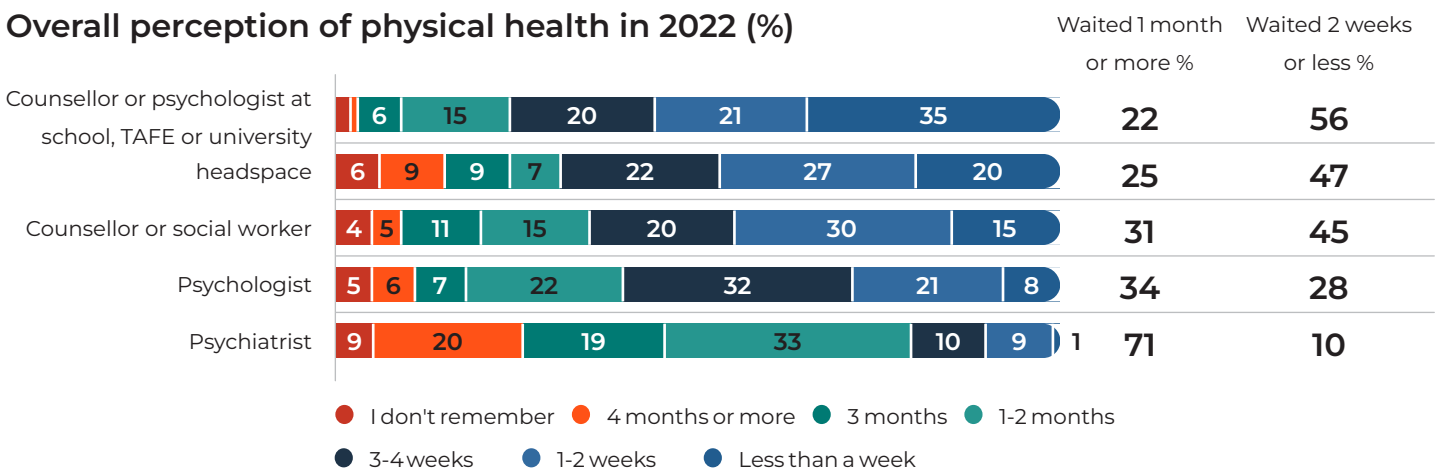
## Mental health support sources accessed – % of those who sought mental health support



### ■ Wait times to access support

While around half of children and young people reported their access to a mental health professional within a school, TAFE or university took two weeks or less, those seeking support for a psychologist or psychiatrist would be more likely to experience a much longer waiting time. One in five children and young people report waiting four months or more to see a psychiatrist.

### Overall perception of physical health in 2022 (%)



Q. Which of the following sources have you used for support in relation to your mental health, in the past 12 months?

Base: those who have sought mental health support in the last 12 months - (n=342);

Q. How long did you have to wait until you had your first appointment with a [mental health professional shown as relevant from previous answers], from when you or your parent first contacted them? Base: Participants indicating they had sought support from each category of professional n=42-117.



# Case Study: Health and Wellbeing

## Involving young people in decisions about health and wellbeing

Several of the Local Health Districts (LHDs) and Health Networks across NSW have youth advisory groups who work to provide a youth perspective on supporting the health of people their age. While there are many fantastic examples of this across NSW, we have included just a few examples below.

### ■ **Hunter New England (HNELHD)**

The Youth Health and Wellbeing Council operates in the Hunter New England LHD and consists of 14 young people, referred to as health consumers, aged 12-24. These youth consumers live across the district and meet quarterly to discuss key health issues and provide advice to services. The consumers have a wide range of different experiences, including those who may engage generally with their GP as well as those who have experienced more acute care and have an understanding of specialist transition services as they move from adolescent to adult care.

The Youth Council regularly provide advice to services about a youth perspective on a wide range of different services. Recent examples include mental health, drug and alcohol use, and multicultural health.

Throughout 2022, they were also consulted on a co-design project around what young people need when it comes to coordinating chronic and complex care. They are also in the early stages of a way-finding project, which will inform how John Hunter Children's Hospital and Community Services helps children and young people navigate health services.

### ■ **Western Sydney (WSLHD)**

Western Sydney LHD has a Youth Council of 16 young people aged 16-25, who work closely with their Youth Health team. They meet monthly to provide local youth perspectives on healthcare and to provide advice about how to improve the health of young people in Western Sydney.

Among their other work over the past year, they contributed to the development of *The Western Sydney Local Health District Young People's Health Strategy 2022*. This strategy includes the perspectives of young people, both from the council and targeted research groups. They spoke about the barriers young people face in accessing healthcare, including limited awareness of existing services; reliance on parents for practical, financial and emotional support; concerns about confidentiality; difficulty connecting with health clinicians; financial barriers to care; and a lack of youth-specific services.



In addition, they drove the organisation of the WSLHD Youth Art competition, a district wide competition open to young people, highlighting the theme of "What does mental health and wellbeing mean to you?" They assisted in organising an exhibition night, which was attended by over 100 people, including the Chief Executive of the District, to highlight the importance of mental health.

### ■ **Northern Sydney (NSLHD)**

Northern Sydney LHD's Population Health Promotion Service employs 12 Youth Consultants aged 16-22 years to share their lived experience and expertise as young people to improve youth health services and initiatives in Northern Sydney.

During 2022, the Youth Consultants:

- Conducted 28 consultations with services. This included, advising the Agency of Clinical Innovation about providing information to young people in relation to the transition from paediatric to adult care; and providing advice and reports to NSLHD health services about what is working well in their service and how to enhance the experience for young people;
- Supported NSLHD's 'Youth Essentials Training' sessions, which upskills health professionals to better engage and support young people;
- Surveyed young people in the community to gather data about youth vaping in Northern Sydney;
- Provided five presentations involving lived experiences and how best to support young people in both hospital and school settings, for NSLHD clinicians, allied health staff, as well as high school teachers and clinicians across NSW;
- Informed a consultation video for the STI Programs Unit to address barriers young people face in accessing GP services for sexual healthcare needs; and
- Conducted six outreach activities including supporting Clinic16 with sexual health promotional stalls.

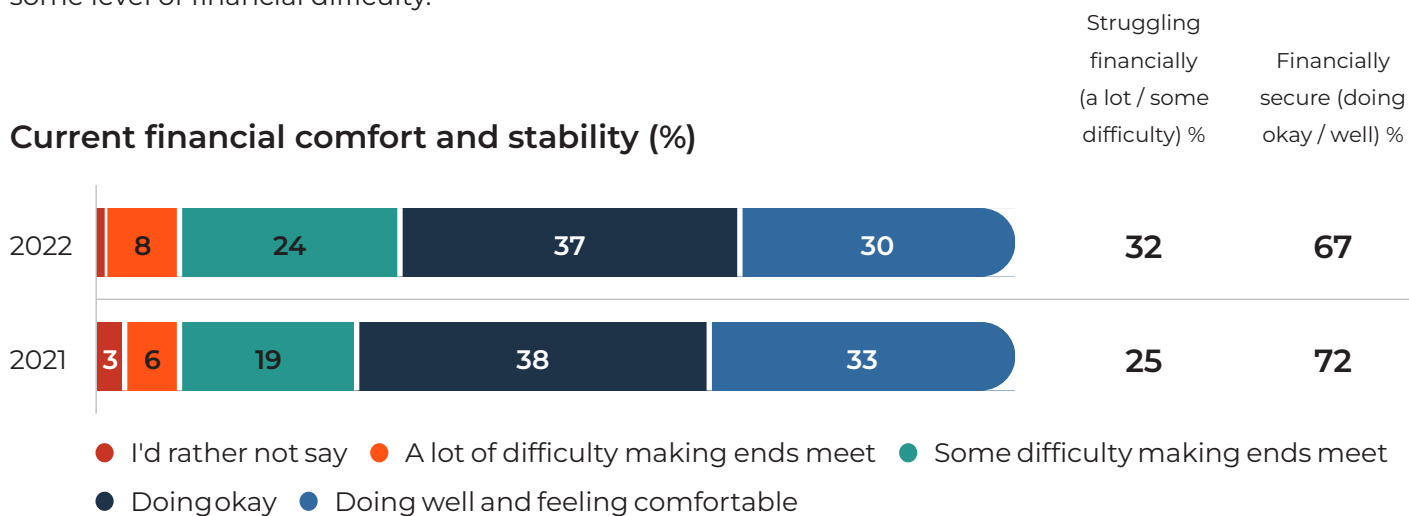


# 04. A Good Standard of Living

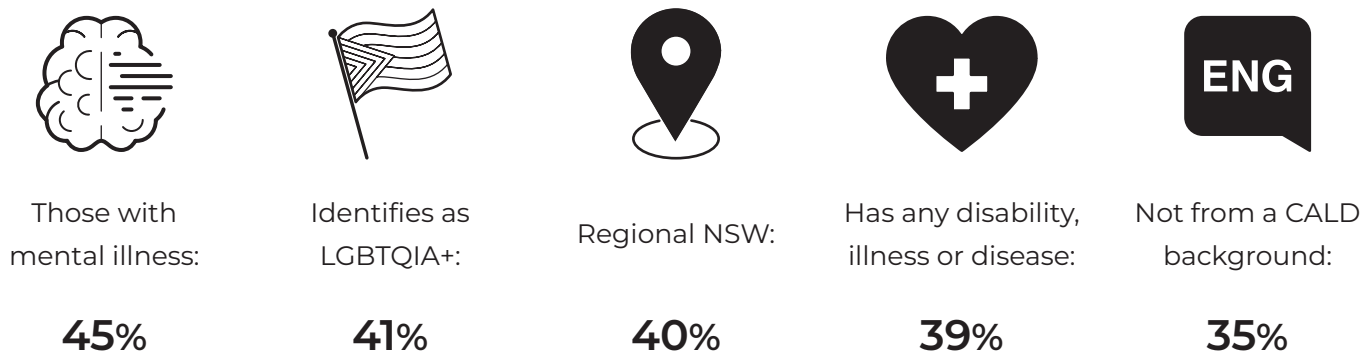
*Children and young people are provided with the necessities they need to thrive. Children and young people do not live in poverty and are provided with adequate services and resources to operate in society.*

## Reported financial situation

While most young people who live independently or are aged over 18 felt they were at least making ends meet, this proportion has declined slightly from last year. Around a third now say they are experiencing some level of financial difficulty.



### Those more likely to feel they are having a lot or some difficulty making ends meet in 2022



Q. Which of the following best describes your financial situation? Base: Those aged 18+ or living independently 2022 (n=513); 2021 (n=484).



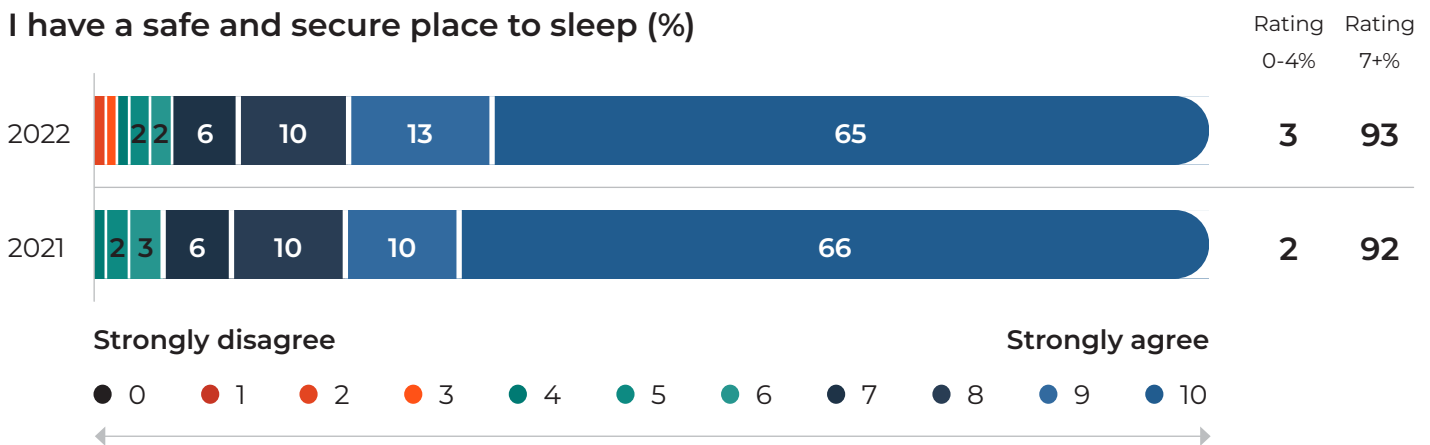


## Access to basic needs

A clear majority of children and young people have access to basic living necessities such as a safe place to sleep, enough clothing and access to services. Being able to eat a healthy and balanced diet was slightly less positive, particularly amongst young parents and those who are not working or studying. This measure also saw a slight decrease, and while not possible to determine from this survey, this is likely in line with increasing costs of living widely documented throughout 2022.

For example, Foodbank’s Hunger Report 2022, found that an increasing number of Australian households are experiencing food insecurity, with households with dependent children and those with young adults 18-24 years old being more susceptible.

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



### Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2022 (rating 0-4/10)



Recent refugee or migrant:

11%



TAFE / VET students:

9%



Has ADHD:

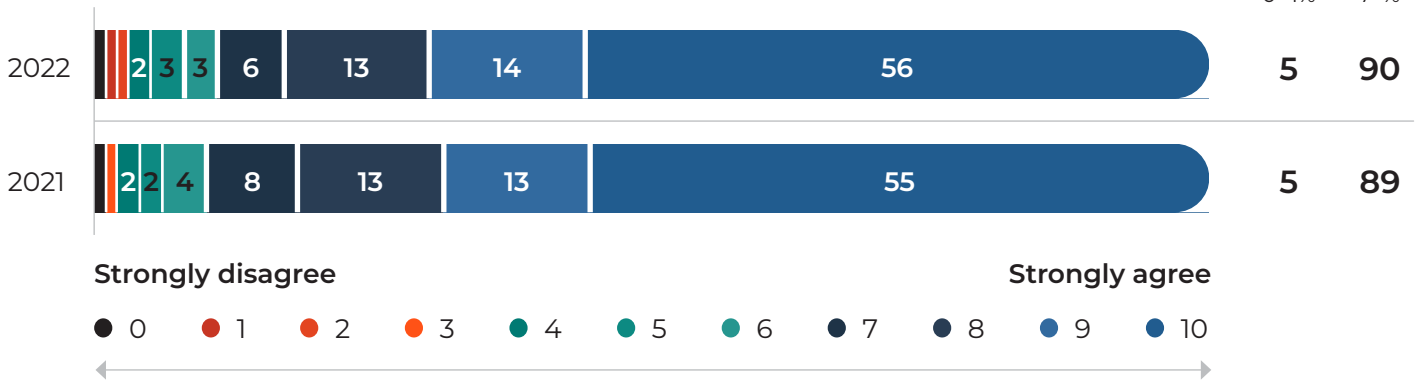
7%

Foodbank (2022) Foodbank Hunger Report 2022, accessed via: <https://reports.foodbank.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Foodbank-Hunger-Report-2022-1.pdf>



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

Rating 0-4% Rating 7+%

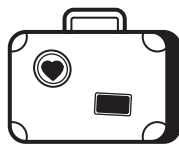


### Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2022



Young parents:

17%



Recent refugee or migrant:

16%



TAFE / VET students:

12%

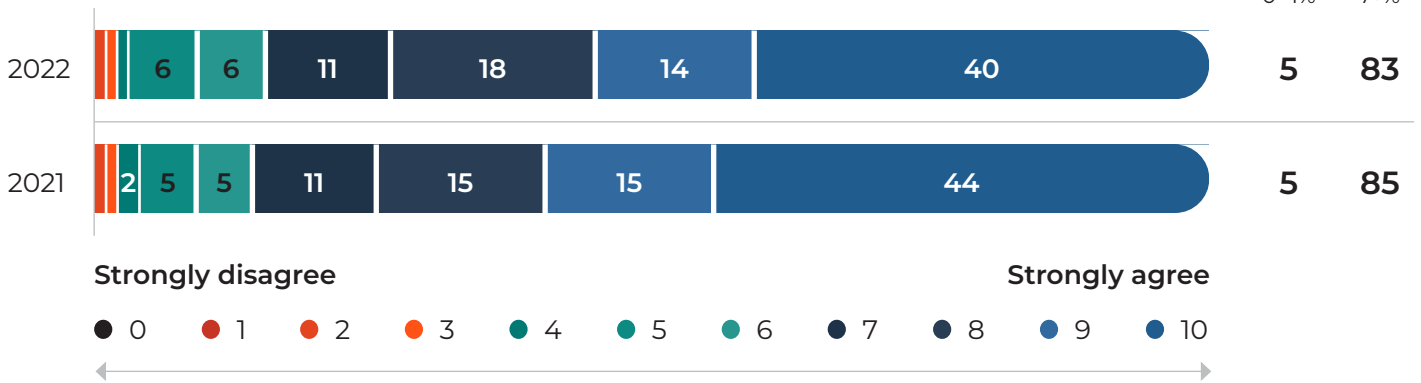


Those with disability:

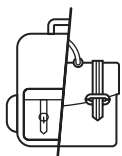
8%

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

Rating 0-4% Rating 7+%



### Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2022



Not working or studying:

15%



Lives alone:

14%



Those struggling financially:

12%

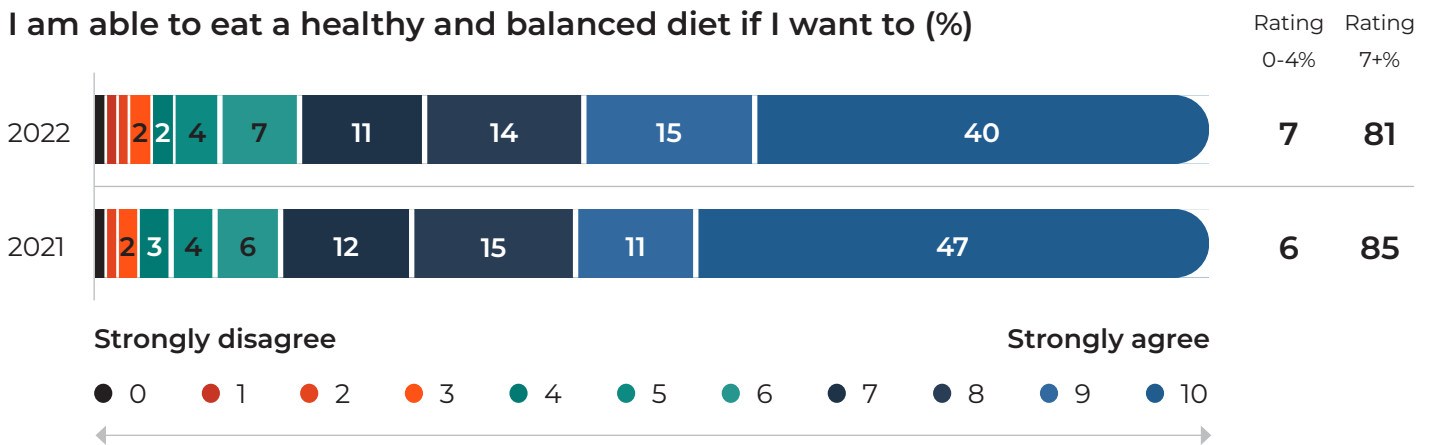


Those with mental illness:

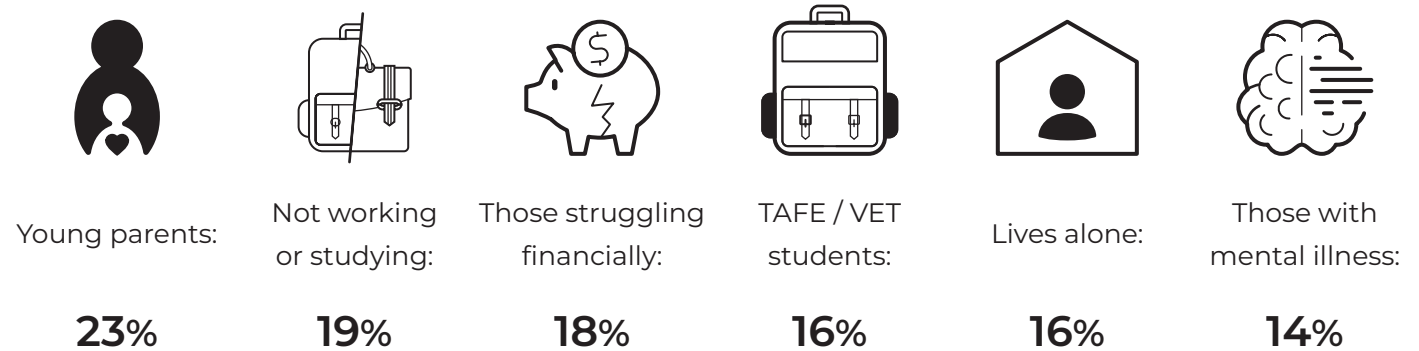
9%



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



### Those more likely to disagree with this statement in 2022



\*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, 2022 (n=1,005); 2021 (n=815).



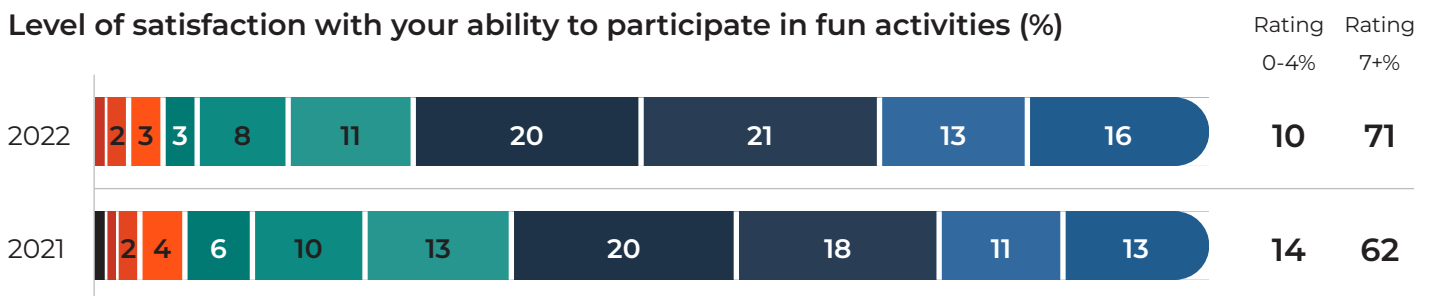
# 05. Environments for Joy and Fun

*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

Most children and young people are satisfied with their ability to participate in fun activities. Since baseline fieldwork was conducted in 2021 during the height of lockdowns in NSW, children and young people's ability to engage in environments and opportunities for joy and fun have increased across all measures.

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



**Level of satisfaction with the quality of fun activities you have access to locally (%)**



Very dissatisfied

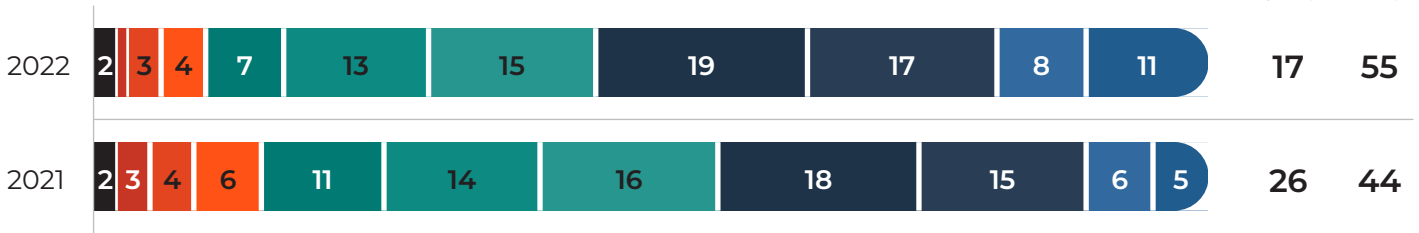
Very satisfied





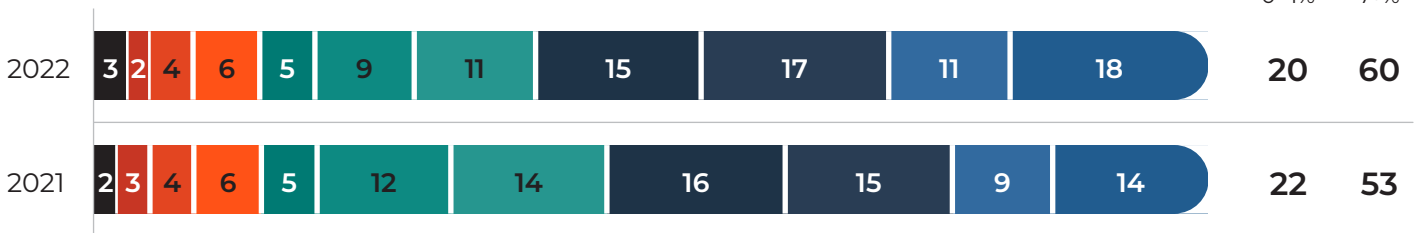
### Level of satisfaction with the variety of fun activities available to you locally (%)

Rating 0-4%      Rating 7+%



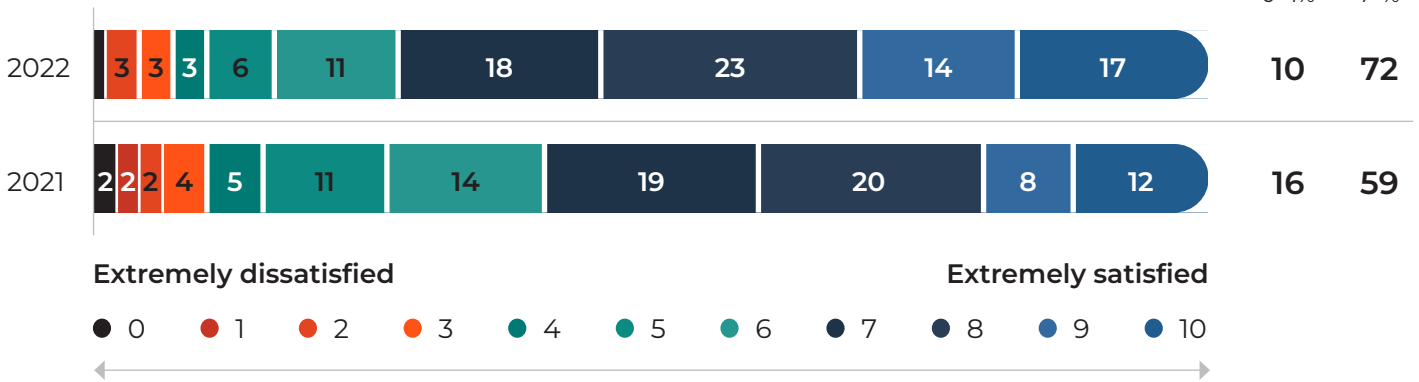
### Satisfaction with your level of participation in sport or physical activity (%)

Rating 0-4%      Rating 7+%



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

Rating 0-4%      Rating 7+%



However, in 2022, there were some groups who faced greater difficulty than others when it came to engaging in fun activities.

Poorer scores were more likely across all measures for those in regional areas, those with a mental illness, those with disability, those struggling financially and those who said they had experienced discrimination. Young parents were also less likely to be able to participate in either physical activity or fun activities.

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...?

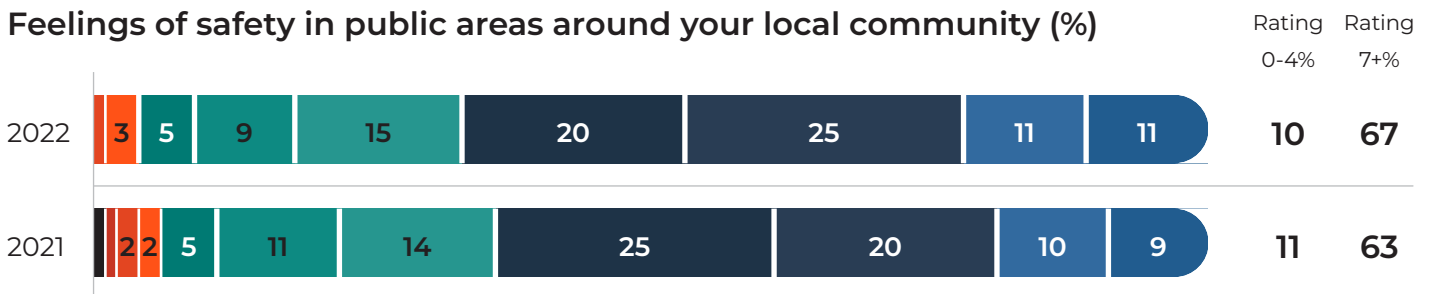
Base: All participants, 2022 (n=1,005); 2021 (n=815).



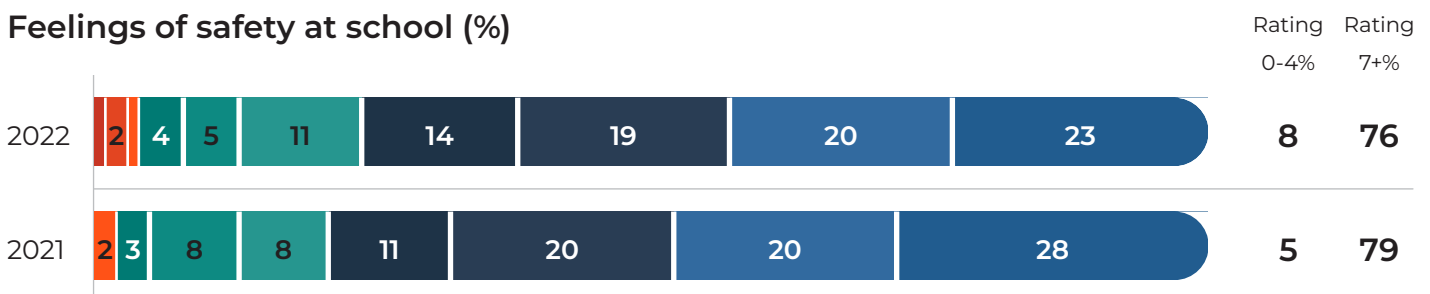
## Feeling safe in public situations

A majority of children and young people reported feeling safe in public situations – particularly at work, and university, TAFE, college, with little change in the past year. While changes are only minimal, there appears to be a slight increase in feelings of safety in most public areas, but a very slight decrease in feelings of safety at school.

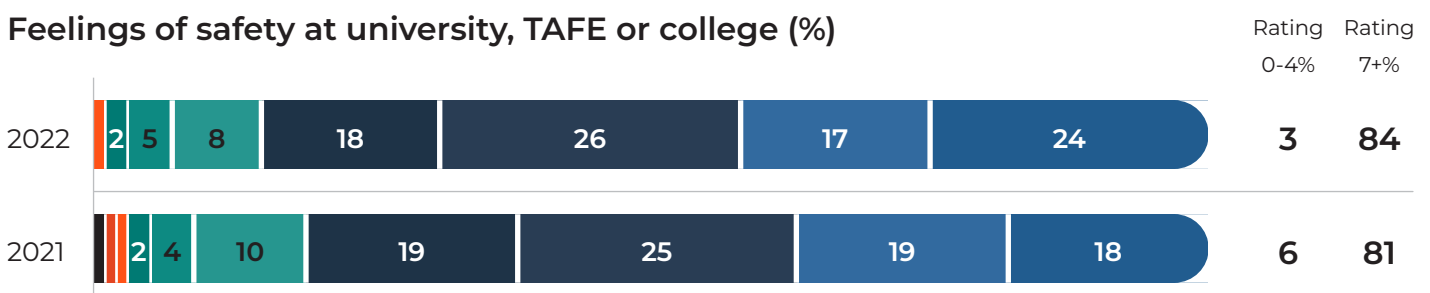
### Feelings of safety in public areas around your local community (%)



### Feelings of safety at school (%)



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



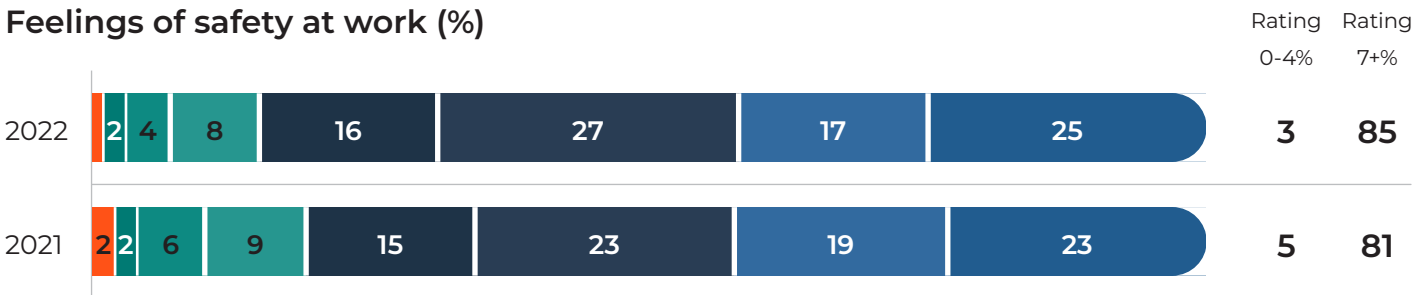
Extremely unsafe

Extremely safe

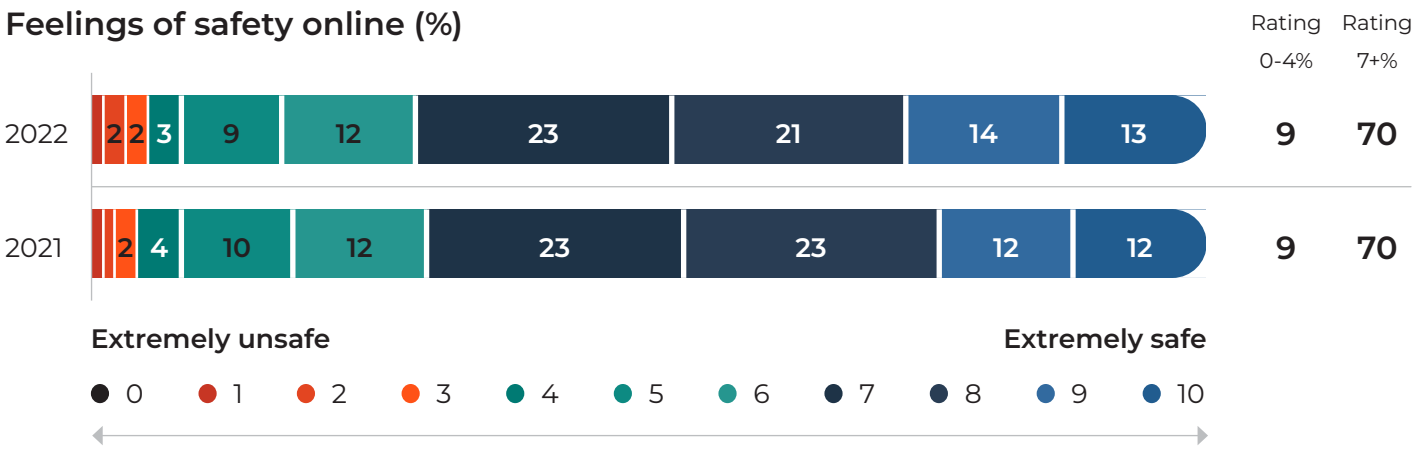




### Feelings of safety at work (%)



### Feelings of safety online (%)



Those with a mental illness were least likely to feel safe in most situations, particularly at school and in public areas.

#### At school (2022):



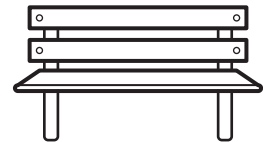
- Those with mental illness — 24%
- Those who had experienced discrimination — 20%
- Those with experience of the justice system — 19%
- Those with disability — 17%

#### Online (2022):



- Those with mental illness — 14%
- Those with disability — 13%

#### In public areas (2022):



- Those with mental illness — 22%
- Those with disability — 18%
- Those struggling financially — 17%
- Those who had experienced discrimination — 15%

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).



## Environments for Joy and Fun in focus

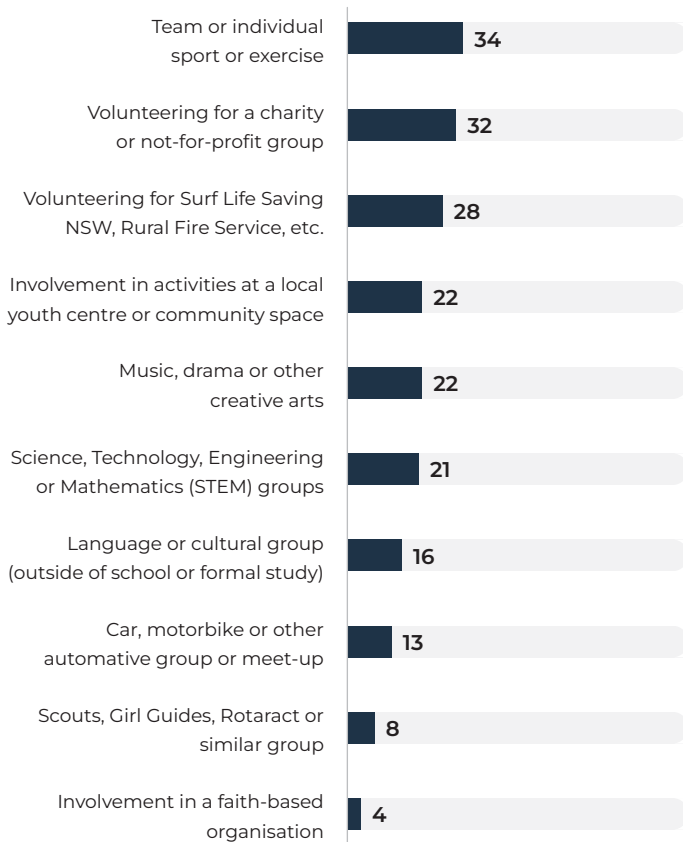
Environments for Joy and Fun was one of the two commitment areas of focus for 2022. As a result, the questions below were added to the 2022 Youth Week Survey to explore what types of activities children and young people like to participate in, and activities that they would like to do more. Children and young people were also asked about barriers to participation in activities, and the reasons that they attend or don't attend events.

### Participation in organised activities

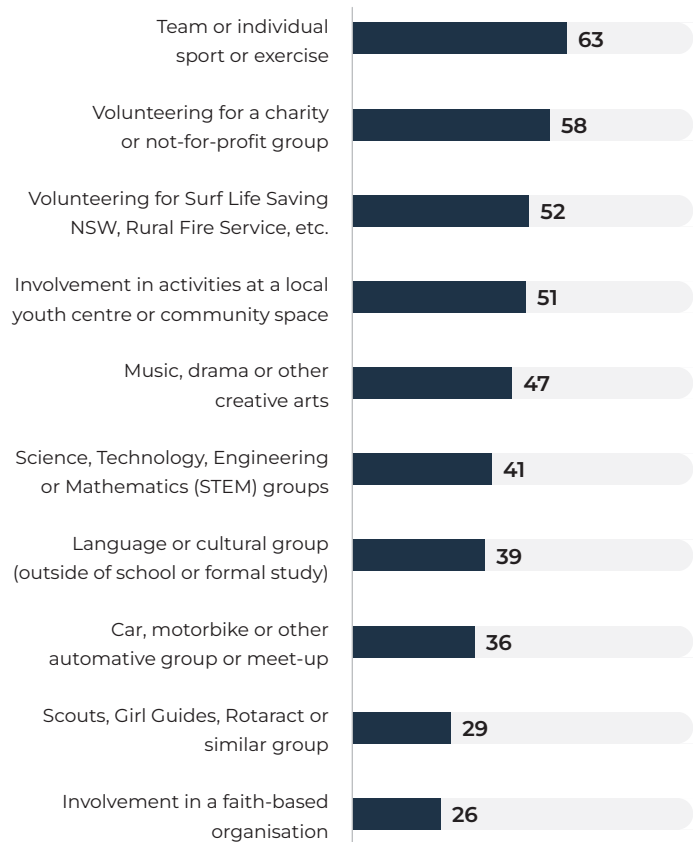
Around one in ten (9%) children and young people reported not participating in any organised activities. Those who were most likely to never participate in organised activities included those with a mental health condition, females aged 14-17 years and young people in the workforce.

Children and young people who don't currently take part in sports-based activities or do so infrequently, expressed a strong interest in doing so. Children and young people also expressed a strong interest in getting involved with volunteering or doing it more often if already involved on an infrequent basis.

#### Organised activities that young people don't currently partake in, but want to (%)



#### Organised activities that young people would like to partake in more often (%)



\*Q. Which, if any, of these organised activities outside of school, work or study would you like to take part in, in the future?

Q. Which, if any, of these organised activities outside of school, work or study would you like to do more often, in the future?

Source: 2022 Youth Week Survey; Base: All participants who never do these activities (n=210-820),

all participants who only occasionally do these activities (n=137-334)

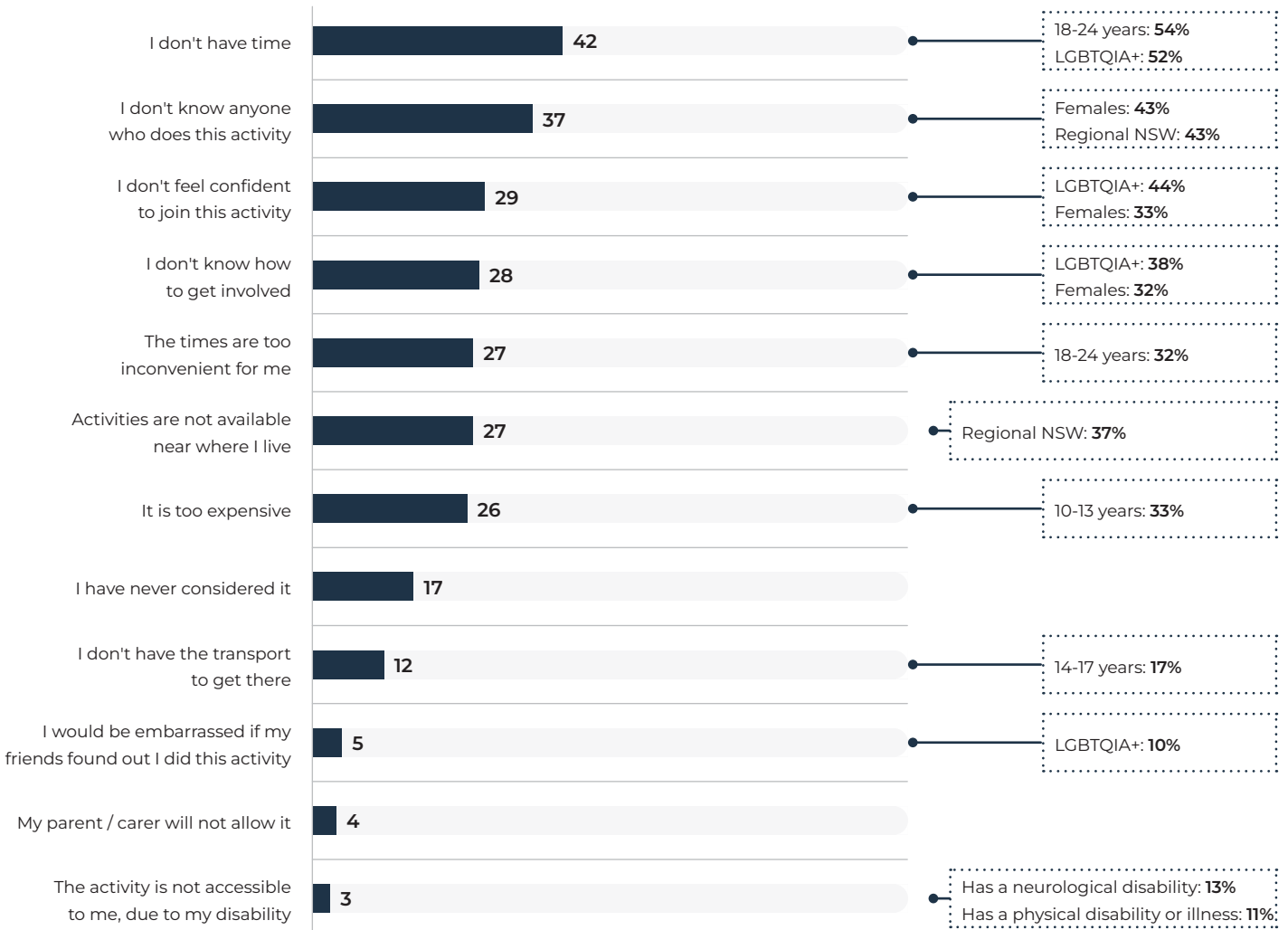




## Reasons for not taking part in activities

Lack of time or companionship are the main barriers preventing children and young people from taking part in activities they are interested in. Young females and LGBTQIA+ people were more likely to agree with a range of reasons that are preventing them from participating in activities.

### What prevents young people from taking part in the activity they are interested in (%)



## Event attendance and information

Nearly two thirds (62%) of children and young people surveyed reported having attended an event in the past three months. Females (70%) and those aged 18-24 years (66%) are those most likely to have attended an event. Those less likely to attend an event included those not studying or working (72%), males (45%) and those aged 14-17 years (43%).

Q. What are the main reasons that prevent you from taking part in the activities that you are interested in?

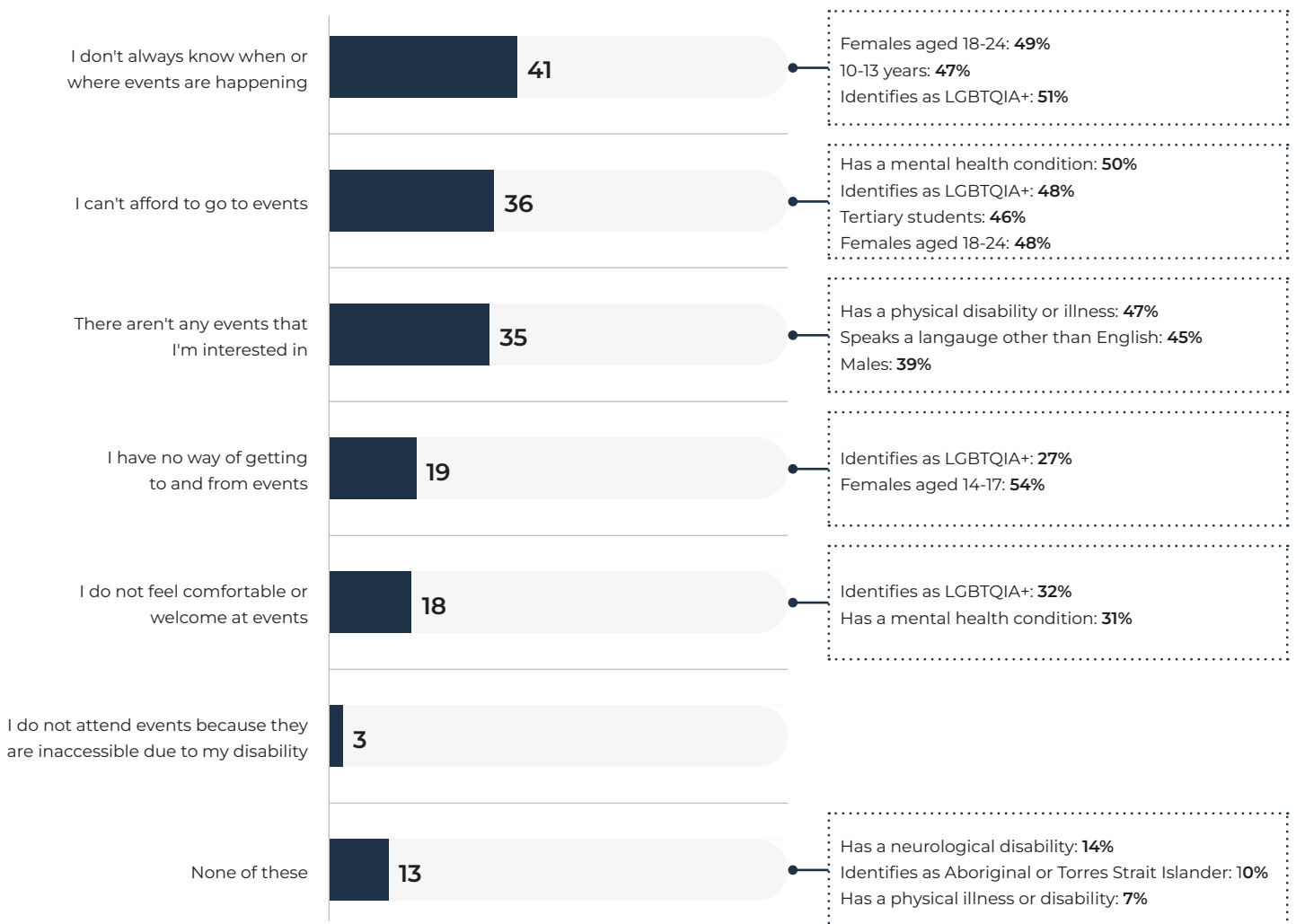
Base: All participants who would like to participate in activities they are interested in (n=884)



Children and young people reported that word-of-mouth plays a key role with the key sources of information about events being friends (53%), family (47%) and social media (47%). Other sources of information included online advertising (28%), searching online (23%), traditional advertising (21%), school / university (17%), gig guides and event listing websites (8%).

Affordability is one key barrier for children and young people attending events, but it is just as likely that they simply don't know that events are happening or are not interested in them. Accessibility is a second-tier issue.

### Reasons for not attending events (%)



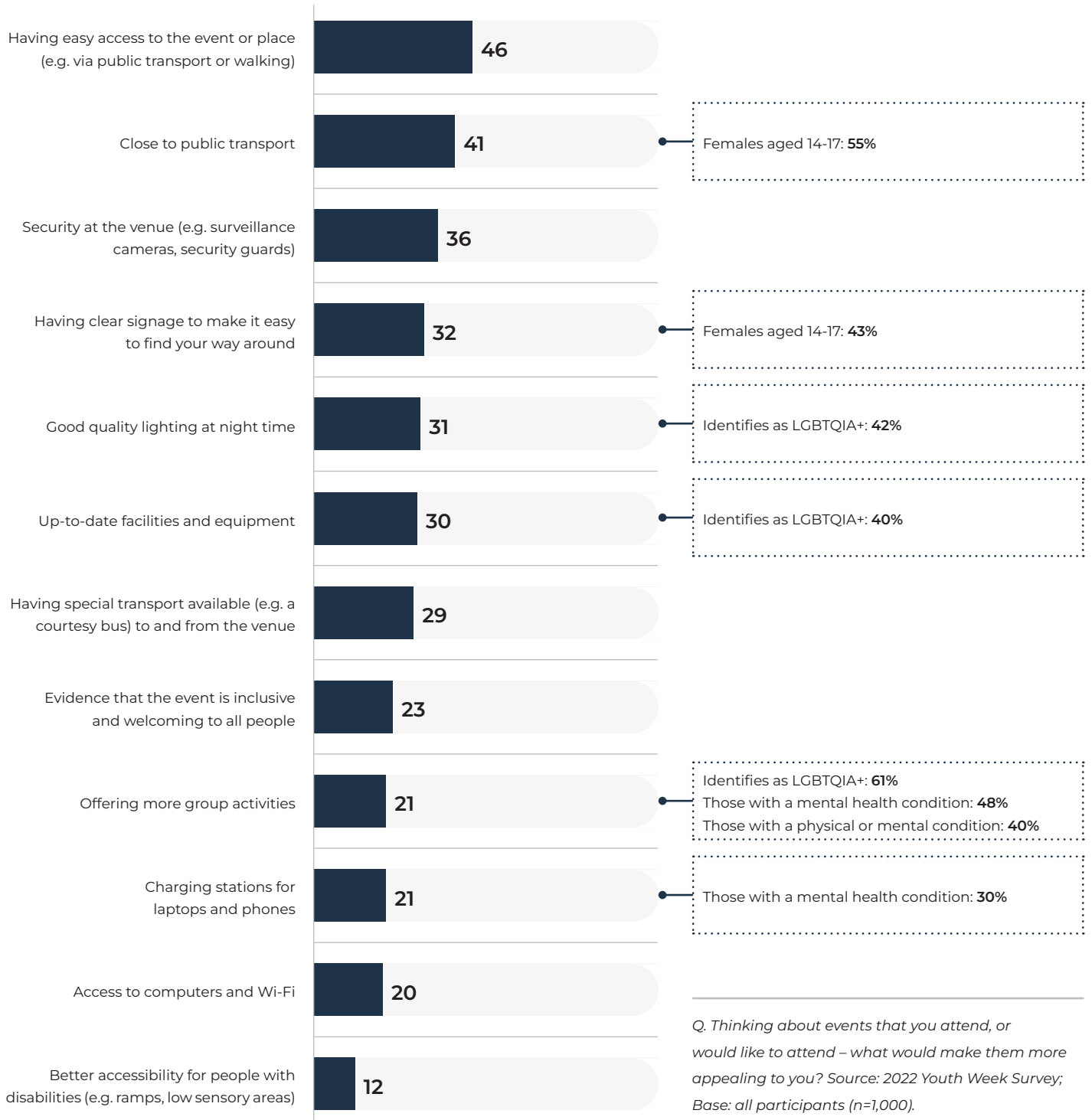
Q. Following are some reasons that other people have given as to why they don't attend events, or don't attend all the events that they would like to. Which, if any, of these issues are true for you? Source: 2022 Youth Week Survey; Base: all participants (n=1,000).



## ■ Making events more appealing to children and young people

Events held in easily accessible locations were most appealing to children and young people. Children and young people also reported that security, clear signage and good quality lighting were also important, particularly to children and young people who identified as female and/or LGBTQIA+. Children and young people also valued events having clear evidence that they are inclusive and welcoming to all children and young people.

### Ways to make events more appealing to children and young people (%)





# Case Study:

## Environments for Joy and Fun

### Involving children and young people in the design of local areas, communities and public spaces

Across NSW there are many good practice examples of the way in which children and young people are being involved in the design of local places, communities, and public spaces. The decisions that are made now about how to shape our local communities will impact on current and future generations, so it is critical that children and young people are a part of these important conversations. Over the past 12 months there have been a number of examples of positive initiatives – from the local council level right through to strategic state-wide initiatives. We have included just a few examples below.

#### ■ **City of Canterbury Bankstown – Children's Summit**

In October 2022, the City of Canterbury Bankstown Council hosted a Children's Summit. Almost 100 children aged 10-12 years came together to discuss how they feel about life in their suburb.

The event was focused on listening to children's thoughts, opinions and perspectives to help improve local services and better meet the needs of children in the local community. Children had the opportunity to participate in fun activities and discuss their favourite things about living in their suburb, as well as what they would like to see in their local area and improvements they would like to make. For those children that were not able to attend the Children's Summit, the Council also provided an opportunity for children in the local area to share their ideas via an online platform.

Following the Children's Summit, Canterbury Bankstown Council recommends providing continuous opportunities for ongoing discussions and projects allowing for civic education, community engagement and child-led projects, such as the establishment of a 'Kids Crew'.

The information provided by the children highlight their concerns and desires for a safer, cleaner, fun and inclusive Canterbury-Bankstown.

It is hoped that in the future, children's voices and ideas can be embedded into local projects, and children and young people, informed of their rights, can participate in decisions affecting them and be taken seriously.



## ■ **2022 Children's Week – ACYP Consultation**

During 2022 Children's Week, ACYP hosted events in Sydney, Lismore, Moruya and Menindee. Over 300 Students participated in a range of activities on the day – including a consultation focused on the *Environments for Joy and Fun* pillar in the Strategic Plan.

During the event, children were asked to think about public open spaces in their community – the places that they might go to meet up with family and friends, have fun, relax, exercise, play sport or connect with nature – and reflect on the good things about those places, how they make them feel, and what they would like to change about those places. Children also had an opportunity to get creative during the day by designing their perfect park, playground, or a place to have fun.

Following the event, ACYP provided a summary of the consultation to the Open Space team at the NSW Department of Planning and Environment. The Department of Planning and Environment is working to make sure that all people across NSW, regardless of age, ability or culture can access fun and enjoyable places to swim, play, roam and explore.

## ■ **Greater Cities Commission – Youth Advisory Panel**

The Greater Cities Commission (the Commission) has recently appointed a new Youth Advisory Panel with members aged between 18 and 29, ensuring that young people have a voice, and are heard, in planning the future of the Six Cities Regions across NSW. The Panel is made up of 12 members, with two members representing each city and three of those members continuing from the Commission's inaugural Panel. New members are appointed for two years, with continuing members appointed for one year.

To complement its Youth Advisory Panel, the Commission has also established the Six Cities Youth Network, which will provide other young people with opportunities to be engaged on issues relating to their city and the broader city region.



# 06. Respect and Acceptance

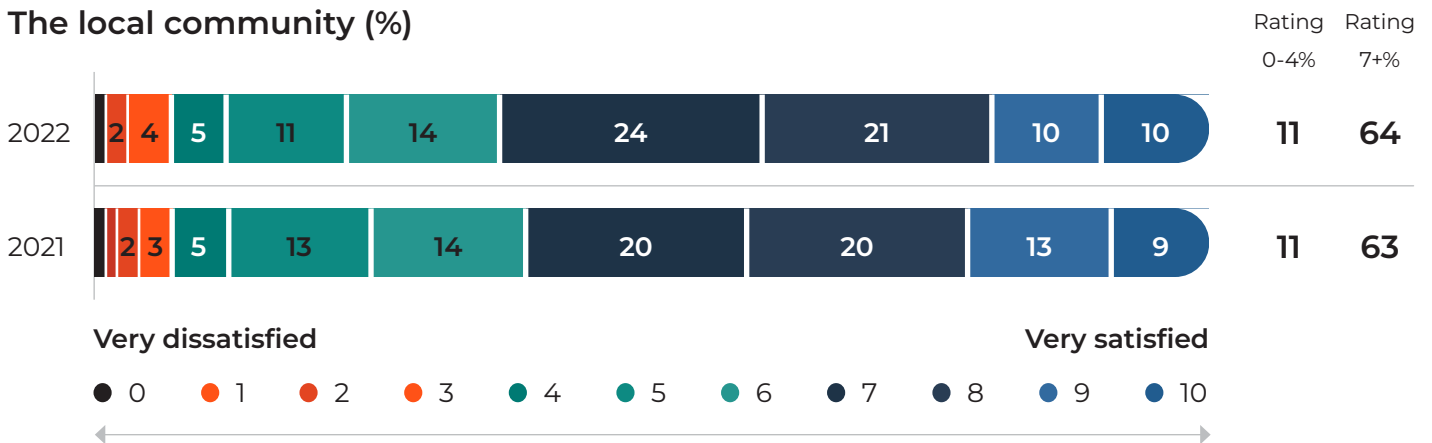
*Children and young people feel respected, accepted and included in society. They are part of a community that supports them to be proud of their culture, diversity and individual identity. They are free from discrimination, racism and structural violence.*

## Level of respect and acceptance experienced

Overall, in 2022 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. However, while satisfaction with the level of respect at work, within tertiary education and in the local community has improved slightly since 2021, there has been a decline in children and young people's satisfaction with the level of respect they experience in school settings.

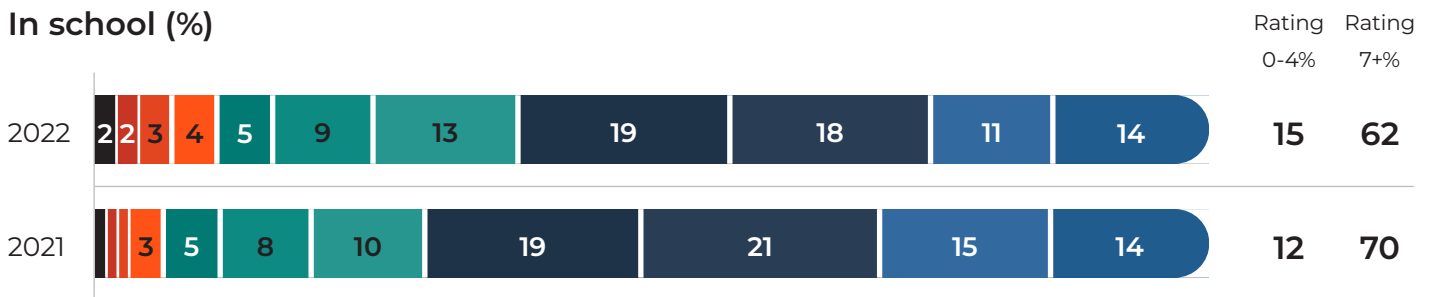
The following charts measure children and young people's satisfaction with the level of respect they are treated with in...

The local community (%)

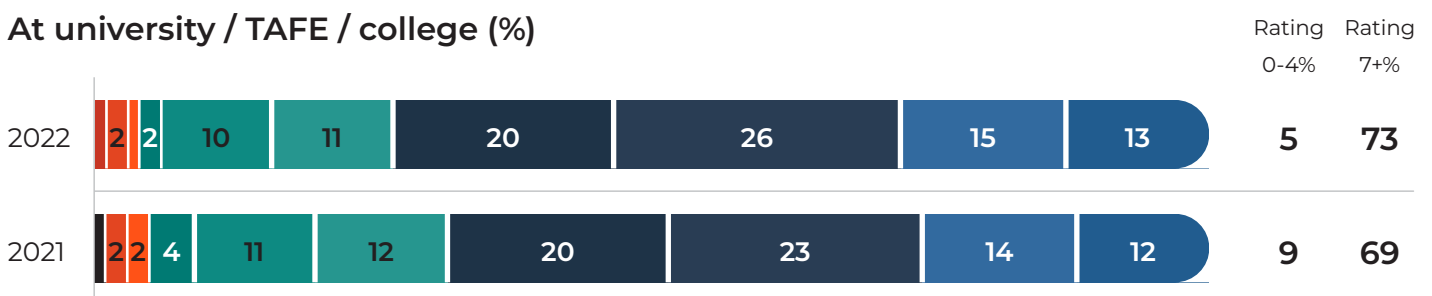




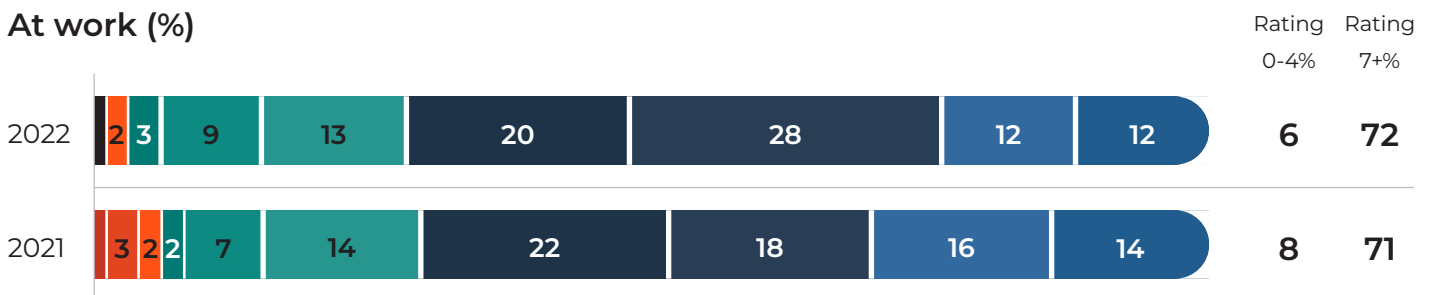
### In school (%)



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



### At work (%)



Very dissatisfied

Very satisfied



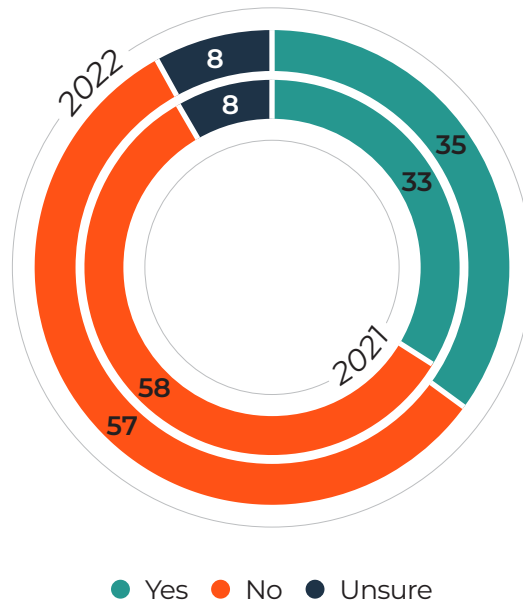
Q. The next question asks about respect and acceptance. How satisfied are you with level of respect in...? All participants though some options only shown as relevant- 2022 (n=1,005); 2021 (n=815)



## Prevalence of discrimination

More than one in three children and young people in NSW reported experiencing discrimination in the past year, with cohorts such as those with a disability, or mental health condition experiencing this significantly more frequently.

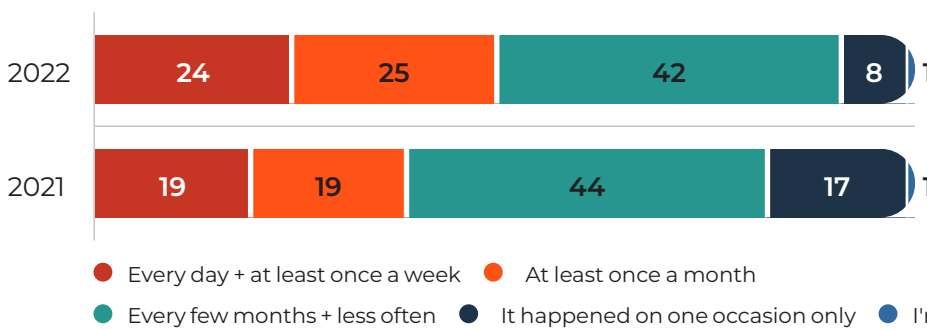
Experienced discrimination in the last 12 months (%)



## Frequency of discrimination

Concerningly, a quarter of those who have been discriminated against in the last 12 months experience this at least weekly. This was higher among those who had an interaction with the justice system (34%) as well as those aged under 18 years (30%).

Frequency of discrimination (%)



As in 2021, in 2022 the top reasons children and young people reported for discrimination were on the basis of: appearance or weight; ethnic / cultural background or skin colour; and gender.

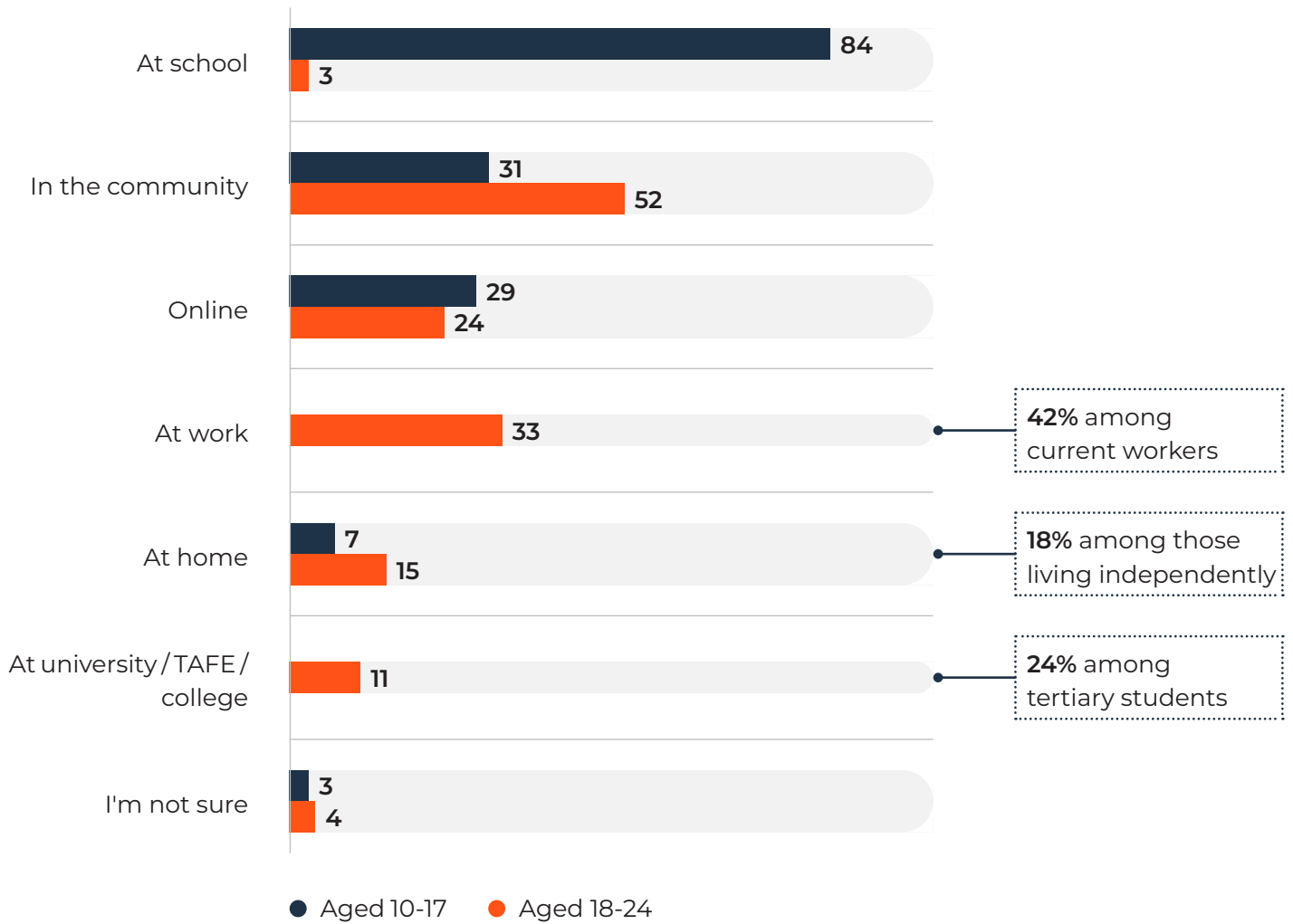
Q. Discrimination is when a person is treated differently (not in a good way) because of some aspect of their identity. In the last 12 months, do you feel that you have experienced discrimination or have been treated unfairly by others? Base: All participants who consented to answer questions on discrimination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

Q. How often have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly in the last 12 months? Base: those who have experienced discrimination, 2022 (n=282); 2021 (n=232).





## Where discrimination occurred – 2022 (%)



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 2022 (n=282)

# 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 spread of responses. Most commonly, in 2022 children and young people wanted to see more youth-specific services and resources, more events and fun activities, better mental health support and help to ease the cost of living.

Top 15 recommendations – 2022	Top 15 recommendations – 2021
1. Provide more youth-specific services and resources (e.g. life skills, financial literacy, art classes, physical activities)	Provide more / better mental health support / resources
2. Provide more events / workshops / fun activities	Create more job opportunities for young people
3. Provide more / better mental health support / resources	Provide more events / workshops / fun activities
4. Provide financial support for young people / those in need	Provide more accessible resources / better support systems
5. Make the cost of living more affordable	Improve the education system / improve the curriculum / more educational programs implemented into schools
6. Provide more recreational / entertainment facilities / playgrounds / parks	Provide financial support for young people / those in need
7. Focus more on bullying	Provide more recreational / entertainment facilities / playgrounds / parks
8. Improve the education system / improve the curriculum	Invest in affordable housing / affordable rent
9. Provide more free counselling / cover the costs of psychologists	Provide better education regarding sexual consent / provide awareness about sex
10. Invest in affordable housing / affordable rent	Ease the COVID restrictions / no more lockdowns
11. Keep the community safe / more police engagement	Emphasise more community events to bring people together / provide more community programs that gather everyone
12. Provide better education regarding sexual consent / provide awareness about sex	Provide more awareness / spread good information
13. Provide courses / programs to help with career goals	Provide support in taking care of the environment / address climate change
14. Create more job opportunities for young people	Manage COVID-19 effectively
15. Provide educational support / more support for school students	Listen to their voice / involve them / take their opinions seriously

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: A selection of coded responses (n=513)



Actually go out and talk to young people...

...so their voices can be heard.



*They could talk and listen more to what young people have to say, that way they might understand what we need.*



**GIVE US  
A VOICE  
and listen  
— to us —**

UNDERSTAND

& **LISTEN** —————

... TO OUR OPINIONS ...

————— & **NEEDS**



Make it easier for young people to voice their opinion.

**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 01

**Date:**

February 2023

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