

Youth Survey Report 2020

By Faye Williamson

The Mission Australia Youth Survey is the largest annual survey of young Australians of its kind.

Now in its 19th year, the Youth Survey aims to identify the values, aspirations and issues of concern to young people. The Youth Survey was developed by Mission Australia to strengthen their capacity to support and advocate for young Australians in need.

In 2020, 25,800 young Australians aged 15 to 19 years participated in the Youth Survey.

The respondents

Close to six in 10 (56.2%) respondents were female and 41.2% were male.

Over one in seven (15.0%) respondents were born overseas and one in five (19.9%) young people spoke a language other than English at home.

In 2020, 6.6% of respondents identified as living with disability.

The vast majority of respondents were studying full-time (86.6%), this was lower than the 2019 results (93.3%).

Four in 10 (40.5%) respondents were working part-time and more than one third (34.7%) indicated they were looking for work, which is consistent with previous years.

Young people and plans for study and training

Of those still at school, 97.3% of young people stated they intended to complete Year 12. A slightly higher proportion of males than females indicated they did not intend to complete Year 12 (3.8% compared with 1.7%).

When asked what they were planning to do after school, go to university was the

most frequent option indicated by young people (64.1%). Many respondents planned to get a job (29.9%) or had travel/gap year plans (23.2%) after school.

One in 10 young people planned to go to TAFE or college (10.2%) or get an apprenticeship (9.6%).

Young people and employment

A very small proportion of respondents who reported paid employment were employed full-time (0.6%), which is unsurprising given the high proportion of respondents still at school.

Top 3 most important issues in Australia today:



Equity and discrimination
40%



COVID-19
39%



Mental health
31%

Four in 10 (40.5%) young people were employed part-time, while nearly six in 10 (58.9%) were not in paid employment: 34.7% stated they were looking for work and 24.2% were neither working nor looking for work.

Three quarters (75.0%) of young people who were looking for work, felt flexible working hours would help them secure a job. Close to six in 10 (58.7%) reported more jobs in their local area was a factor to securing a job.

What young people value

The three most highly valued items nationally were friendships (82.5%), family relationships (78.9%) and school or study satisfaction (67.5%). Close to two thirds of respondents also placed a high value

upon mental health (65.9%) and physical health (65.4%).

Issues of personal concern

The responses for the top three concerns were:

1. coping with stress (42.5%),
2. mental health (33.9%) and
3. body image (33.0%).

Close to one third (32.4%) of respondents indicated they were either extremely or very concerned about school or study problems.

Nearly one quarter (24.3%) of young people were either extremely or very concerned about physical health. The proportion of females concerned about these issues was much higher than the proportion of males.

Biggest personal issue

In 2020, the top three biggest personal issues identified by young people were:

1. education (34.2%),
2. mental health (17.2%) and
3. COVID-19 (9.3%).

Top 3 factors to securing a job:

- 1. Flexible working hours 75%**
- 2. More jobs in local area 59%**
- 3. Work experience 42%**

Of the 9.3% of respondents who reported COVID-19, the top three related concerns were around:

1. education (32.5%),
2. COVID-19 in general (31.2%) and
3. isolation (20.7%).

One in six (17.0%) young people were concerned about COVID-19 and mental health.

Young people's experiences of unfair treatment

Over one quarter (27.0%) of young people reported they had been treated unfairly in the past year.

Of the 27.0% who had been treated unfairly:

- 41% reported the unfair treatment was due to their gender.
- 30.4% reported they were treated unfairly due to their race/cultural background.
- 26% were treated unfairly due to their mental health.

More than double the proportion of females were treated unfairly due to their gender (48.0% compared with 22.5% of males).

Where young people go for help with important issues

As in previous years the three most frequently cited sources of help were:

1. friends (83.5%),
2. parents (71.7%) and
3. relative/family friend (55.3%).

Around half of young people indicated they would go to their brother/sister (49.6%) or the internet (48.2%) for support with important issues in their lives.

Most important issues in Australia today
In 2020, the top three issues identified by young people were:



1. equity and discrimination,
2. COVID-19 and
3. mental health.

Around four in 10 young people identified equity and discrimination (40.2%) and COVID-19 (38.8%) as important issues in Australia today.

Three in 10 respondents reported mental health (30.6%) and the environment (29.8%) as important national issues.

Since 2019, the proportion of those reporting equity and discrimination as a key national issue has increased from 24.8% to 40.2%. Conversely, concerns about alcohol and drugs and mental health have decreased since 2019.

How stressed are young people?

For the first time in 2020, young people were asked to report on how much of the time they felt stressed in the past four weeks.

Of those who experienced unfair treatment:



More than four in 10 (42.6%) young people felt stressed either all of the time or most of the time. Double the proportion of female respondents felt stressed all of the time or most of the time (53.9% compared with 26.8% of males).

Happiness and the future

The majority of young people (58.6%) indicated they felt very happy/happy with their lives overall. A greater proportion of males reported feeling very happy/happy with their lives as a whole (65.6% compared with 54.4% of females).

Nearly six in 10 (55.5%) felt either very positive (12.3%) or positive (43.2%) about the future. ■

Source: Youth Survey Report 2020, Mission Australia.

Young people were asked about their experiences of unfair treatment. In the past year:

