

2025 YOUTH SURVEY REPORT



Acknowledgement

Surf Coast Shire Council Acknowledges the Wadawurrung People, and Gulidjan and Gadubanud Peoples of the Eastern Maar, their Elders and leaders past, present and emerging as the Traditional Owners of the skies, land, waters and sea country across our municipality.

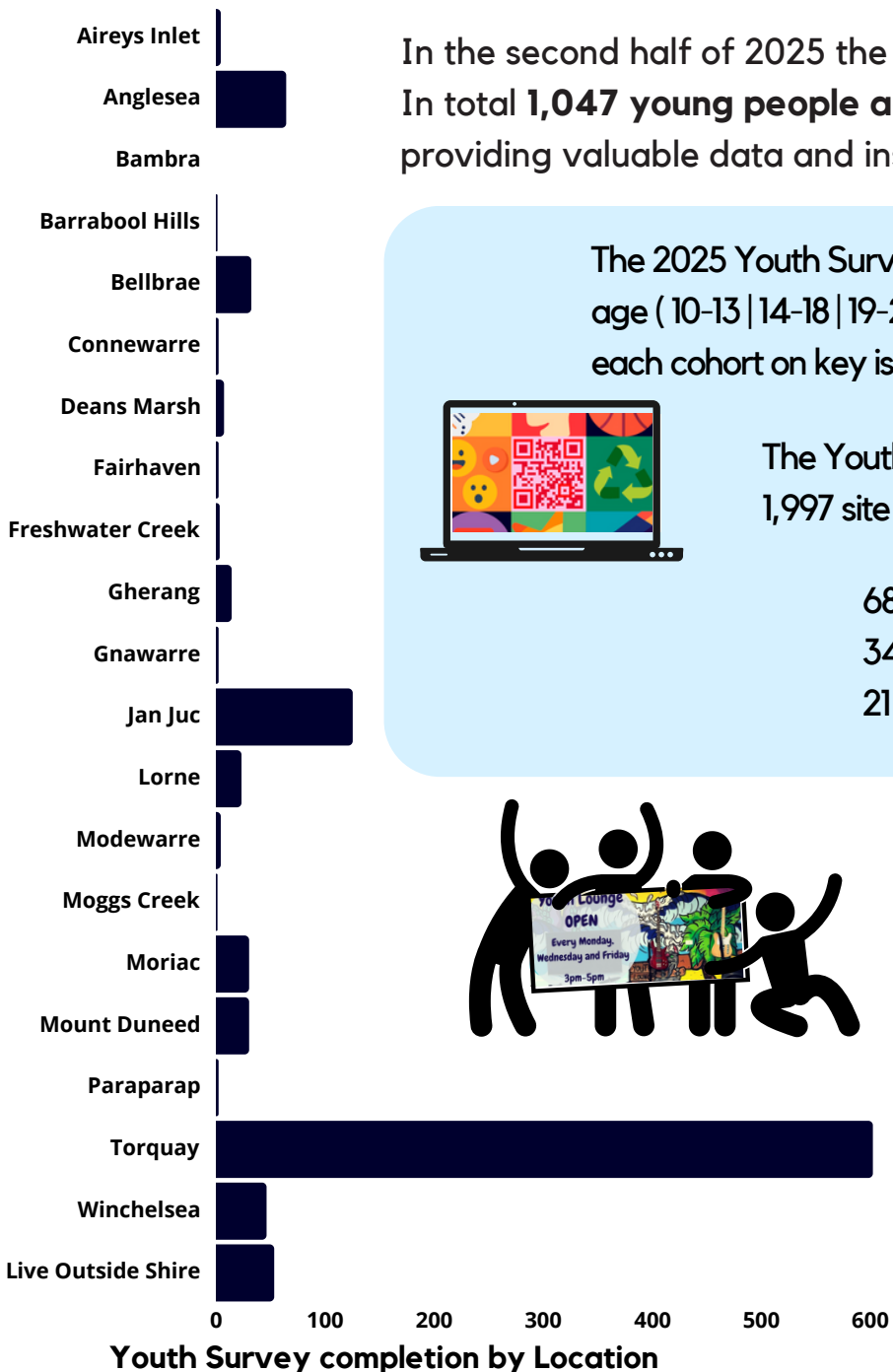
We also extend our respect to all First Nations people who are part of the community.

Statement of Authorship

This report was developed by Youth Gurus, an independent social enterprise based in the Surf Coast region, on behalf of the Surf Coast Shire Council. Youth Gurus specialises in youth research, engagement, and capacity-building, and works to amplify the voices and experiences of young people across country Victoria. For more information about our work and mission, visit www.youthgurus.com.au

Our Approach to Gender Equity

In line with Council's commitment to gender equity, this report presents male and female responses separately at various points to highlight any meaningful differences in experiences and perspectives across the Surf Coast Youth Survey. A smaller number of respondents identified as gender diverse. While their voices are vital, the sample size was not large enough to produce statistically significant findings. Presenting this data in detail could also risk compromising the anonymity of these young people. For these reasons, we have not provided disaggregated results for gender-diverse respondents. Instead, their responses are included within the overall dataset, and their insights have informed the broader narrative and recommendations throughout this report. This approach ensures both data integrity and the safety and confidentiality of all young people who participated.



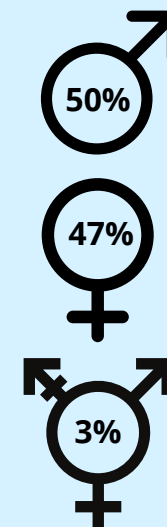
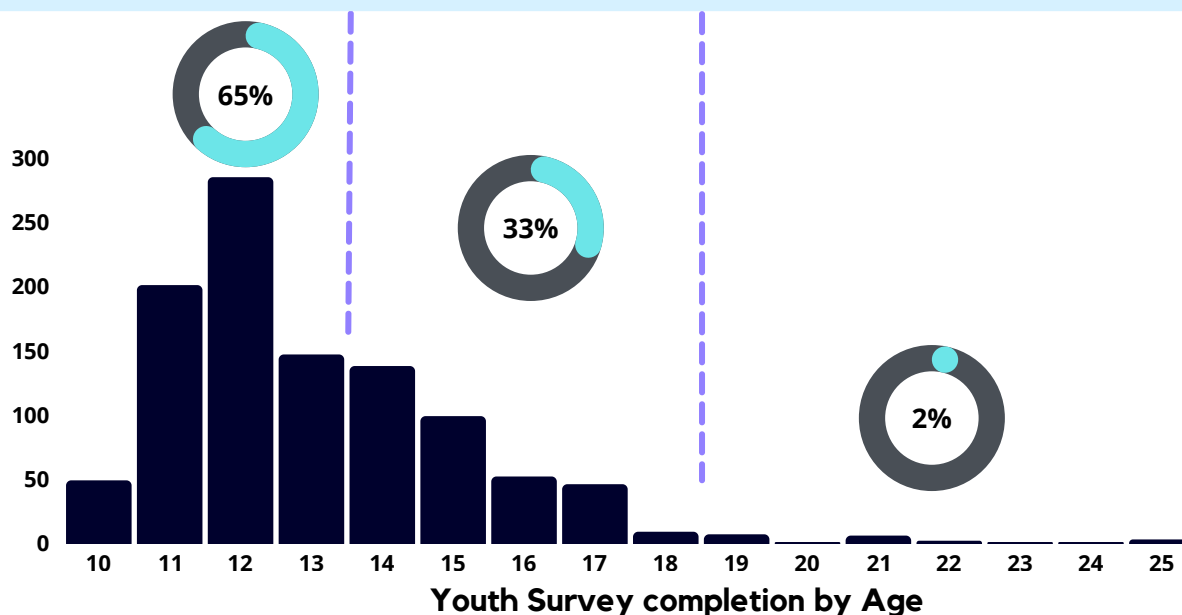
In the second half of 2025 the Surf Coast Youth Survey was conducted by the Surf Coast Shire Youth team. In total **1,047 young people aged between 10 and 25 years of age completed the youth survey** providing valuable data and insight to help shape the Surf Coast Shire's new Youth Action Plan 2025 -2029.

The 2025 Youth Survey was designed to target three separate cohorts based on age (10-13 | 14-18 | 19-25 year olds) with survey questions being curated to engage each cohort on key issues and topics in an age appropriate manner.



The Youth Survey webpage was viewed 3,705 times with 85% of the 1,997 site visits coming via a direct link or QR code access.

682 young people completed the 10 - 13 year old Youth Survey
 344 young people complete the 14 - 18 year old Youth Survey
 21 young adults completed the 19 - 25 year old Youth Survey



Young people and their connections

Living Here



94% of young people would describe living on or near the Surf Coast as either good (21%), great (34%) or amazing (39%)

The Future



95% of young people said they were excited about the future. (sometimes 16% mostly 52% always 27%)

Community Connection



77% of young people told us they feel connected to their community (50% sometimes 27% strongly connected).
Increase of 5% from 2021

In 10 Years time will they still be in the Surf Coast Shire?

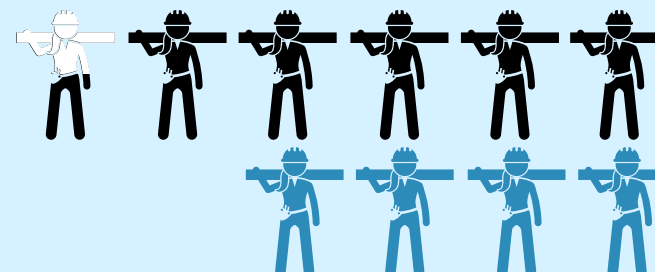


43% of young people aged 14-25 were unsure if they would be living, working or studying on or near the Surf Coast in ten years time.

20% said they would still be here.

37% thought they would not.

Young people (14-18 y.o.) and their relationship with work



5 & 1/2 out of 10 young people were happy with their work status

4 out of 10 young people wanted work or more work.

Pros = love of the natural beauty and local community, proximity to friends, family and beach

Cons = High cost of living, including property prices and the rental squeeze.

Uncertainty = desire to travel, possibly need to leave for work or study opportunities. Ten years is a long time in to the future.

Young people described their relationship with social media and screens as:

Back in 2021

Healthy (51%)

Addictive (32%)
Educational (27%)
Helpful (27%)
It's Complicated (25%)



Now in 2025

Addictive (30%)

Healthy (18%)
Educational (18%)
Hardly Use Screens (18%)
Unhealthy (12%)

The most commonly reported activities among all young people include:

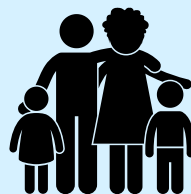
Spending time with friends (87% females, 73% males)

Spending time with family (67% females, 54% males)

Participating in organised sports (63% females, 65% males)

Music activities - listening or playing (68% females, 43% males)

What young people do for F U N



Family



Friends



Sport



Music



The following activities showed substantially higher participation rates among females:

Creating art (38% females vs. 15% males)

Dancing (28% females vs. 2% males)

Shopping (70% females vs. 15% males)

Time with pets/animals (61% females vs. 39% males)

Cooking (60% females vs. 31% males)

Music - listening or playing (68% females vs. 43% males)

Live music events (26% females vs. 11% males)

Going out/partying/gatherings (55% females vs. 28% males)



The following activities showed substantially higher participation rates among males:

Mountain biking (38% males vs. 9% females)

Online games (62% males vs. 33% females)

Sports/online gambling/pokies (14% males vs. 3% females)

Skating/scootering/BMX (21% males vs. 10% females)

Four-wheel driving/motorbikes/ATVs (18% males vs. 6% females)

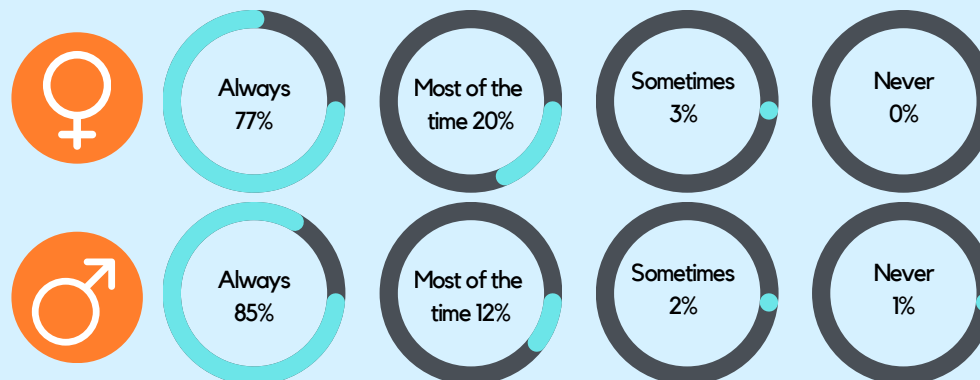
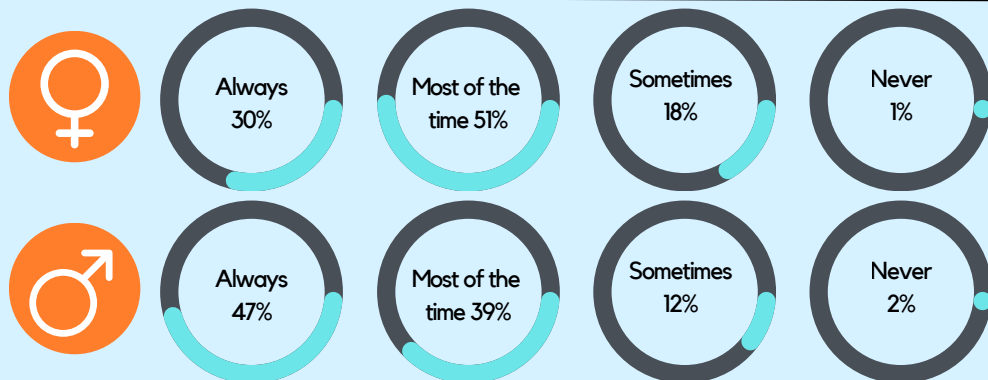


Where young people feel safe

Young people aged 10-25

Generally the data consistently shows us that young males feel safer than young females at home, in the community and online within the 10-25 year old age cohort.

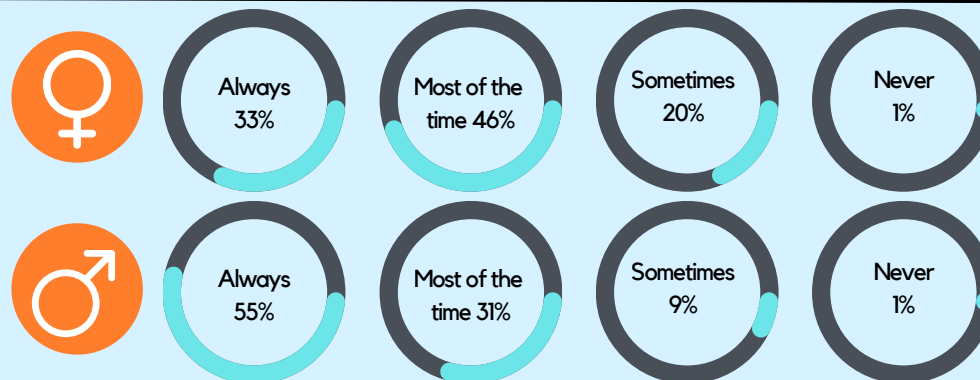
At home



In the community



Online



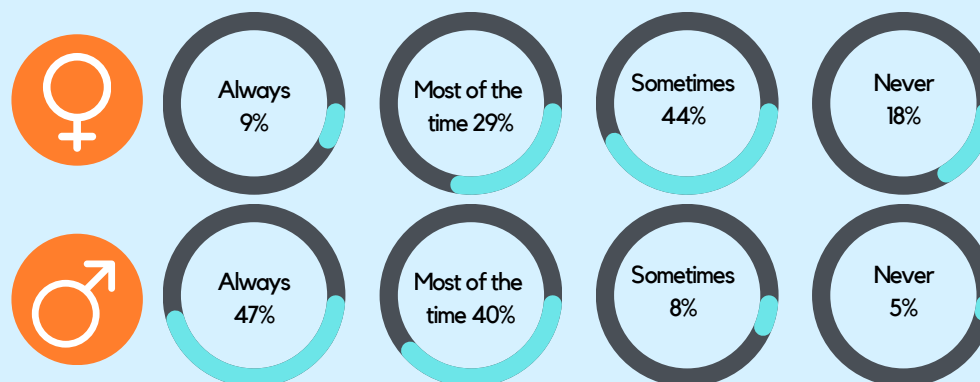
Please note that 4% of males selected "Does not apply to me" for online safety

Where young people feel safe

Young people aged 14-25



Walking home at night

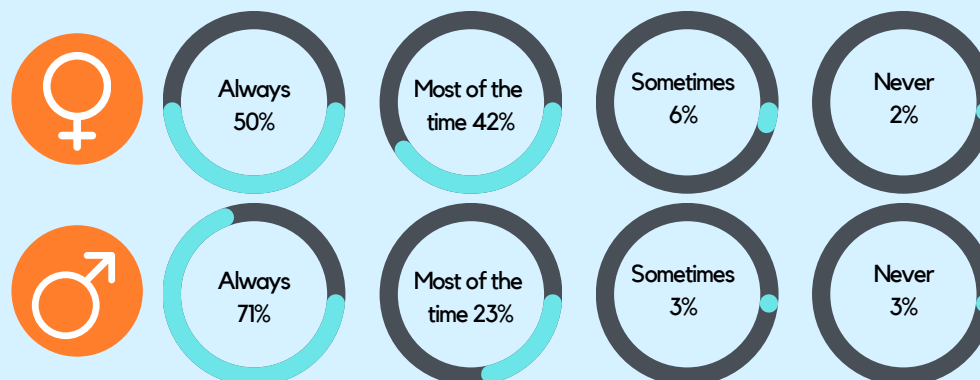


For the 14-25 year old cohort we asked additional safety questions which highlighted a disparity between young males and young females. This was particularly evident in regards to walking home at night with 47% of young males reporting they always feel safe compared to only 9% of young females; and 18% of young female respondents aged 14-25 telling us they never feel safe walking home at night, compared to 5% of young males.

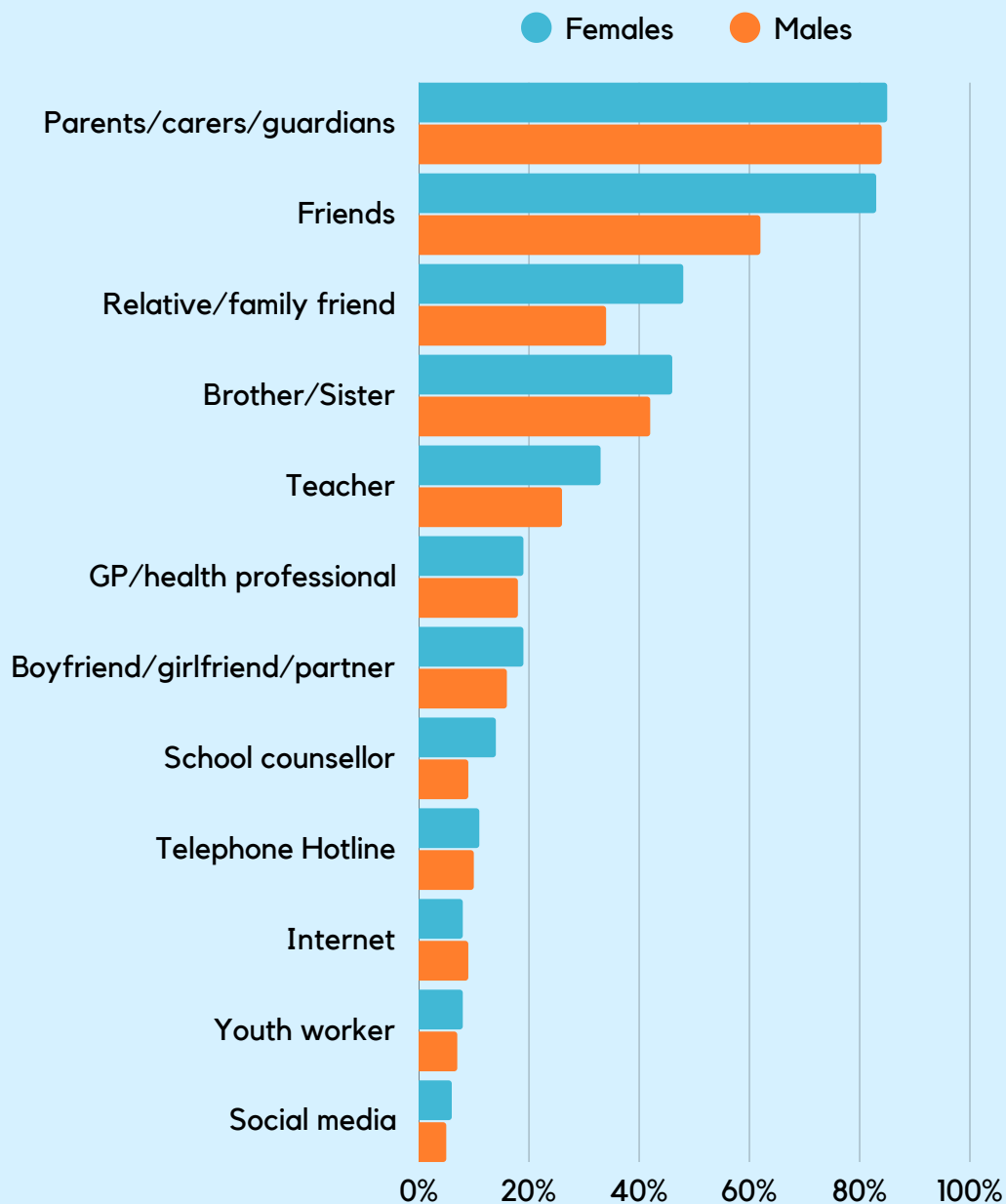
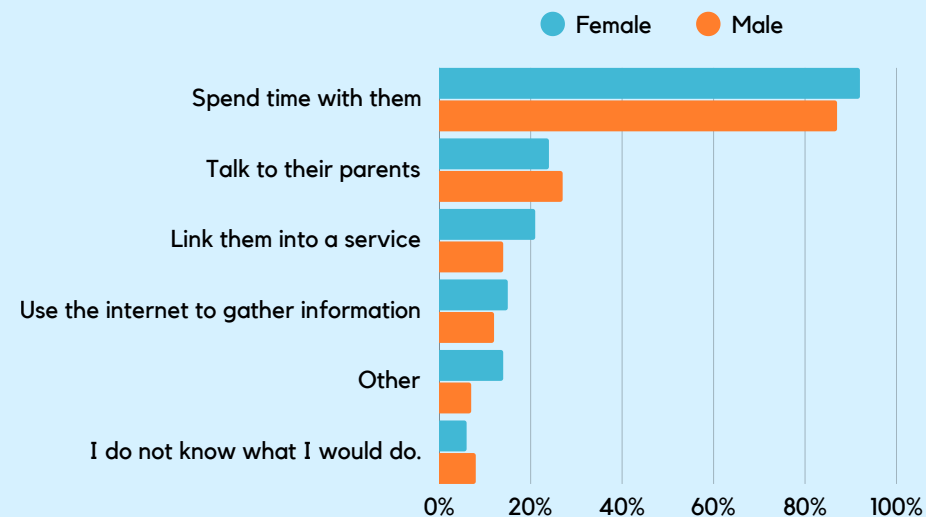
Additionally, 71% of young male respondents told us they always feel safe walking or riding around town in daylight hours, compared to 50% of young female respondents aged 14-25.



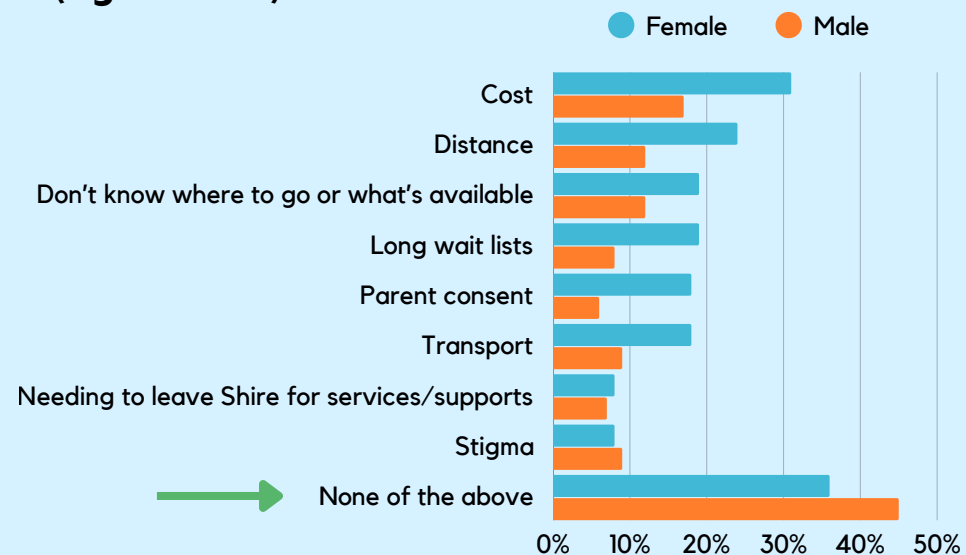
Walking or riding around town in daylight hours



Where young people (aged 10-25) go to for support and how they might help a friend if they came to them for support



Barriers to seeking help or accessing services (ages 14-25)



What young people (aged 14-25) have been personally concerned about in the last year

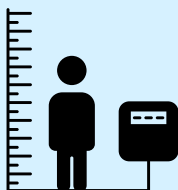
Young people were asked to rank their top 10 personal concerns from a Mission Australia list of 24 key issues facing young people.

Top 10 Personal Concerns Females aged 14-25

Coping with stress, anxiety, mental health and family conflict were all identified at a higher rate by female survey respondents compared to males.



#1 Coping with Stress



#2 Body Image



#3 Anxiety



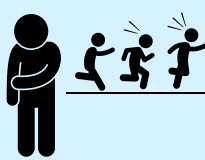
#4 Mental Health



#5 Cost of Living



#6 Family Conflict



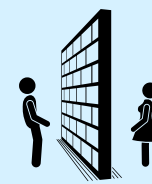
#7 Physical Health



#8 Bullying



#9 Climate Change

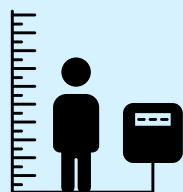


#10 Relationship Issues



Top 10 Personal Concerns Males aged 14-25

Body image, cost of living, physical health, climate change and unemployment were all identified more frequently by males compared to female survey respondents.



#1 Body Image



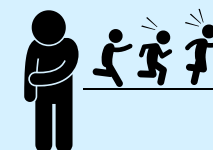
#2 Cost of Living



#3 Coping with Stress



#4 Anxiety



#5 Physical Health



#6 Mental Health



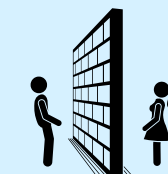
#7 Climate Change



#8 Bullying



#9 Unemployment



#10 Relationship Issues

Personal challenges facing young people (aged 10-25)

Young people aged 10-25 answered a series of three open ended questions focusing on the personal challenges they face, their friends and other young people face, and the broader community face. Below are the **four main themes** (in no particular order) that emerged throughout the responses of over 1,000 young people, living, working, studying or playing within the Surf Coast Shire.



Mental Health & Wellbeing

Many young people reported struggling with anxiety, depression, and stress.

Mental health emerged as a significant concern across age groups, with many mentioning feelings of insecurity and pressure.

"Bullying, anxiety and LGBTQIA+ things are my biggest challenge right now."

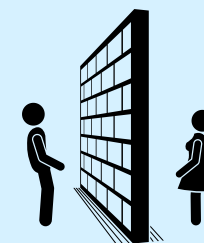
- Young person aged 17

Friendship challenges, bullying, and difficulty making connections were common themes.

Many young people mentioned feeling left out, navigating friendship changes, and coping with online interactions.

"The biggest personal challenge for me is going through changes and drifting away from friends."

- 10 year old female



Social Connectedness



School Stress and Academic Pressure

School-related stress was consistently mentioned, including homework, tests, and academic expectations.

Many expressed concerns about transitions to high school and balancing schoolwork with other commitments.

"The biggest challenge I am personally facing is being overwhelmed with school and making my parents proud."

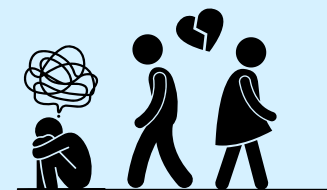
- 13 year old female

Many young people spoke of the challenges related to parents separating, living between different homes, and family conflicts.

These situations create additional emotional pressure for young people.

"My biggest challenge is having divorced parents."

- 13 year old male



Family Dynamics

Community challenges facing young people (aged 10-25)

Young people aged 10-25 answered a series of three open ended questions focusing on the community challenges they face, their friends and other young people face, and the broader community face. Below are the **four main themes** (in no particular order) that emerged throughout the responses of over 1,000 young people, living, working, studying or playing within the Surf Coast Shire.



Recreation & Activities

Many mentioned the lack of places to hang out, limited bike paths/jumps, and insufficient facilities for sports and non-sporting activities. There was a strong call for more youth-friendly spaces and activities to meet diverse needs.

"Have more things to do where people can safely hang out and meet up."

- 16 year old female

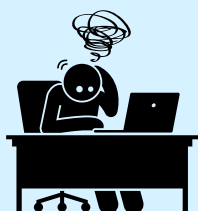
Young people expressed care for their environment, calling out issues like littering and pollution, and expressing the desire to rise to the sustainability challenges within the community.

SAVE
OUR
EARTH

Environmental Concerns

"No littering. There is too much rubbish in our environment. Reduce plastic waste."

- 12 year old male



Technology Balance

Many young people identified excessive screen time, online gaming and social media use as challenges affecting themselves and their peers. There was a clear awareness of the need for better digital balance.

"Without realising it we are becoming distanced and disconnected more than ever... constant dopamine is effecting our relationships and how young people operate in a social setting."

- 18 year old male

Limited public transport options make it difficult for young people to connect with friends, access activities, and develop independence. E-bike/scooter use and safety was also frequently mentioned.



Transport & Access

"I believe that we need more public transport to other towns like Anglesea, Armstrong Creek or Aireys Inlet, as well more safety measures for women."

- 15 year old female

What would make the Surf Coast better for all young people (aged 10-25)?

Young people aged 10-25 answered two open ended questions focused on what would improve the Surf Coast Shire and make it a better place for all young people.

Below are the **five key themes** (in no particular order) that were consistently mentioned in this section of the Surf Coast Youth Survey.

Recreation and Sports Infrastructure

More diverse and accessible sports facilities:

- Bike parks, MTB jumps, and trails with proper maintenance
- Basketball and netball courts with quality surfaces
- Improved skate parks and pump tracks

Youth Voice and Agency

Greater input in community decisions:

- Consultation on decisions that interest and affect them
- Opportunities to initiate and lead projects
- Recognition of their capabilities and contributions

Social and Entertainment Venues

Places where young people can hang out:

- Dedicated youth centers and age-appropriate hangout spaces
- All-ages events and venues that don't require adult accompaniment
- Movie theaters, shopping centers with youth-oriented shops and food outlets

Accessibility and Wellbeing

Better access to services and support:

- Affordable or free activities and sports participation
- Better public transport between towns and to Geelong
- Accessible mental health services and support groups

Community Connection and Inclusion

Meaningful integration into community life:

- More community events specifically for youth
- Inclusive spaces welcoming to all backgrounds and identities
- Regular festivals, markets and social gatherings



Find out more online at Surf Coast Youth