

AUSTRALIA'S ATTITUDES TO YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Results of a national Orygen/YouGov poll

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FOREWORD



Professor Patrick McGorry
Executive Director, Orygen

The mental health of young people is in the spotlight like never before.

This summary of results from our new national poll, independently conducted by YouGov in February 2022, provides a compelling picture of Australia's attitudes to youth mental health.

It's the second poll to be commissioned by Orygen, Australia's centre of excellence in youth mental health, in the lead up to a federal election.

The results provide powerful insights into the views of a cross-section of Australian voters and reinforce the expert findings of the recent Productivity Commission into mental health and the Royal Commission into Victoria's mental health system, among others.

Together they speak to a fundamental systemic weakness and the mental health system's failure to provide care for young people with moderate to severe and complex conditions who are too unwell for primary level services, such as headspace, but not unwell enough to meet the threshold for tertiary specialist or inpatient care.

It is heartbreaking that tens of thousands of young people in Australia are currently falling through this gap in the system – a gap the mental health sector and governments call the 'missing middle'.

The pandemic has further highlighted the scale and impact of the missing middle. Mental health professionals and services are overwhelmed by demand, which has led to a surge of young people, particularly young women, presenting to emergency departments in high distress, at suicidal risk or following self-harm. Tragically, suicide remains the leading cause of death among young Australians.

Now more than ever, Australia's young people need a network of new services in local communities designed to provide access to care where there is currently a gap in the system.

Australia has voted – it's time to fill the missing middle.

Patrick D. McGorry

KEY FINDINGS

Australians believe the next federal government should prioritise mental health



80%

of Australians agree mental health should be a top priority for the next federal government

Young voters

aged 18-24 say mental health funding is a core issue, along with climate change, economic management and job security



7 in 10

undecided voters see mental health as a pressing issue



1 in 5 voters

say mental health funding is one of their top two election issues

Australians are not confident they can access mental health care for a young person before it reaches crisis point

One-third



of voters don't feel confident they could get help for a young person struggling with their mental health before it becomes a crisis

40%

of people in rural areas are not confident in finding mental health support for a young person, compared to



31%

in metro areas



Australians want equitable and readily accessible mental health services

85%



of voters say mental health services for young people should extend beyond headspace and GPs

4 in 5



Australians

say there needs to be more government investment and services for youth mental health

Three-quarters

of voters aged 18–24 believe young people with serious mental illness are currently unable to access the specialist care they need



Australians are concerned about access to youth mental health services relative to other health services

Only one-third

of voters thought access to mental health treatment for young people was good



In contrast, **73%** and **60%** of respondents respectively felt access to GPs and dental care was good



9 of out 10

Australians say there needs to be a mental health system that serves the needs of everyone, not just a fortunate few, and can be accessed by young people where and when they need it

89%



of voters agree that untreated mental ill-health can derail young people's lives

88%



agree that young people should have ready access to community-based mental health care

This poll was conducted online by YouGov in February 2022. The national sample of 1,990 Australian voters aged 18 and over included age, gender and geographical quotas. The data collected was weighted by age, gender, location, and education to reflect ABS Australian population estimates.

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IN MIND** *ory
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