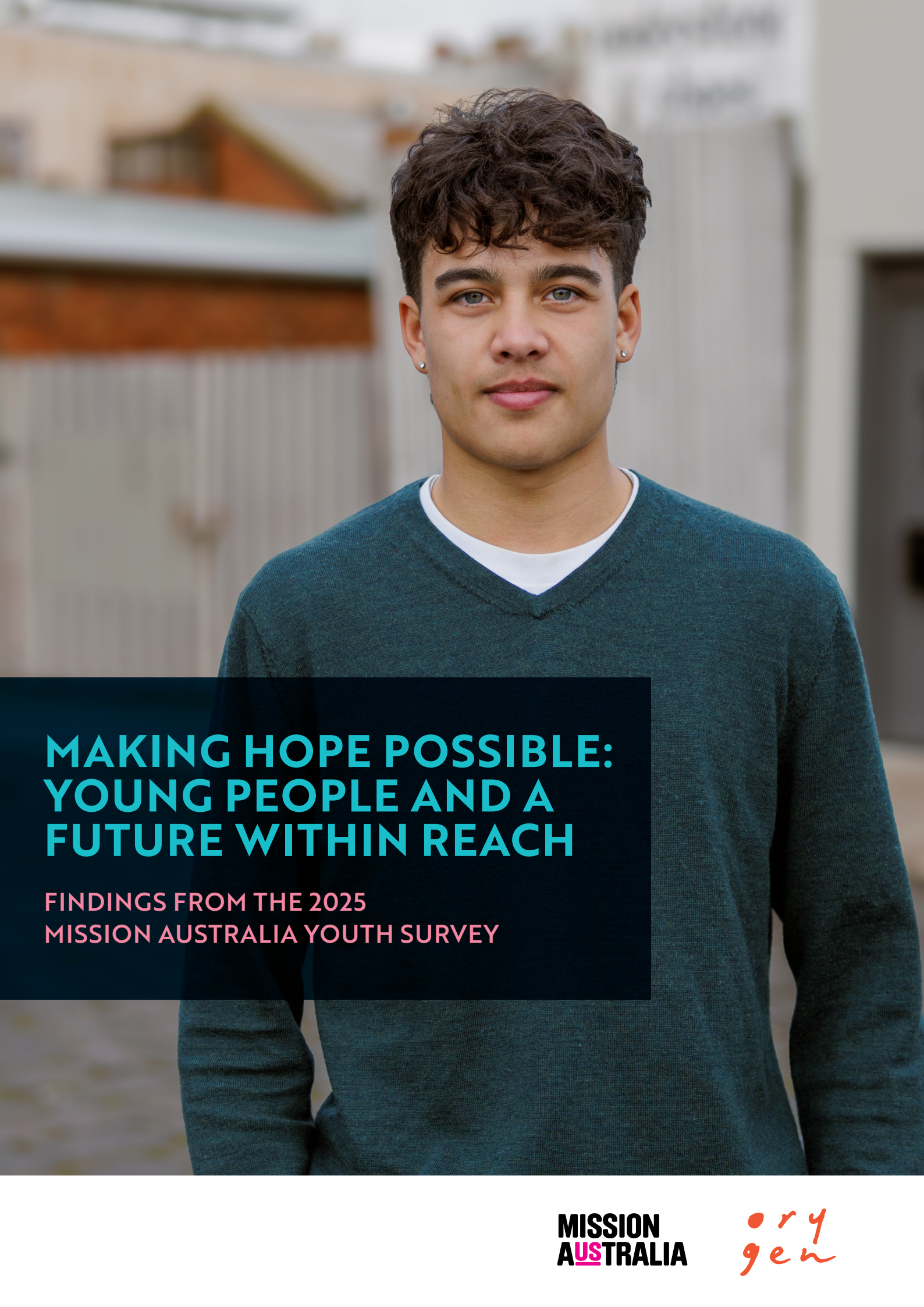




MAKING HOPE POSSIBLE: YOUNG PEOPLE AND A FUTURE WITHIN REACH

FINDINGS FROM THE 2025
MISSION AUSTRALIA YOUTH SURVEY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of lands throughout Australia and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, culture and community, and acknowledge the generations who will carry these cultures forward.

This report was developed by Orygen in partnership with Mission Australia. The work was led by Kate Filia, Mengmeng Wang, Shu Mei Teo, Caroline Gao, Katherine Mok and Vivienne Browne from Orygen, and Naheen Brennan, Tamara Freeburn and Andrew Kos from Mission Australia. The expert input of other contributors from Orygen and Mission Australia who provided helpful insights, feedback, design and support were instrumental in shaping the work.

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We also acknowledge the importance of young people as our future leaders and thank all those who participated in the 2025 Mission Australia Youth Survey. We are grateful to the young people who shared their experiences, perspectives and hopes for the future, including the circumstances that shape their mental health and wellbeing and their opportunities for the future.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mission Australia *Youth Survey* has been capturing the aspirations, experiences and concerns of young people across Australia each year since 2002. As Australia's largest annual survey of young people, it provides an important evidence base for policy, practice and advocacy by giving young people a national platform to share what matters to them and their perspectives on the issues affecting their lives.

Orygen, the National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health, partners with Mission Australia to use these insights to better understand issues affecting young people and their mental health and wellbeing.

This report draws on responses from **17,155 young people aged 14–19 years** who took part in the 2025 *Youth Survey*, to examine what young people hope for as they move towards adulthood. It explores how young people feel about their futures, and how confident they are that they can navigate the challenges ahead and achieve the lives they want. It also examines how young people's current circumstances, including their mental health and wellbeing, financial and housing circumstances, social relationships and support, and access to opportunities and resources, are related to whether their future goals feel within reach.

Young people are coming of age during a period of considerable uncertainty, shaped by rising costs of living and housing insecurity, climate change, geopolitical instability, and rapid social and technological change. Against this backdrop, young people still have clear hopes for the lives they want to build.

Almost three in five identified *employment and career goals* among their biggest hopes for the future, while close to half hoped for *strong family relationships and connections* and *financial security, wealth or owning a home*. Around three in five young people also felt *positive or very positive* when they thought about their future.

But feeling positive about the future is only part of the picture. Young people's confidence in navigating the practical challenges ahead varied depending on the area of their future lives they were considering. Around seven in ten young people felt confident about *making smart choices about money, asking for career advice* and *managing their own healthcare*. Confidence was somewhat lower in their ability to *handle future stress or problems* (58%) or *manage in a rapidly changing world of work* (55%). Confidence was lowest when it came to housing: just over half (53%) felt confident they would be able to *afford a safe place to live* in the future. Notably, young people were more confident in their ability to make *smart choices about money* than in their ability to *afford safe housing*. This suggests that confidence in their own skills may not be enough when achieving the futures they want also depends on the conditions and opportunities available to them.



How young people felt about their future and their confidence in navigating it were closely related. Among young people who felt positive about their future, 63% reported high confidence across at least five of the six areas examined, compared with 21% of those who did not feel positive. However, there were substantial differences in future outlook and confidence across groups of young people. Young people experiencing mental health challenges, disability and other forms of disadvantage were more likely to report a less positive future outlook and lower confidence.

These differences in future outlook and confidence were also related to the circumstances of young people's lives today. Young people with both a less positive future outlook and low confidence were more likely to experience psychological distress, a lack of control over their lives and loneliness, as well as social exclusion across their

relationships, education, financial circumstances and housing. As experiences of social exclusion accumulated, a positive future outlook and higher confidence became progressively less common.

Hope is not just something young people have. It is something we help make possible.

While the cross-sectional nature of the survey means we cannot determine cause and effect, these findings show why supporting young people's futures requires more than encouraging optimism.

Young people's hopes for the future remain strong, however their optimism is being tested by cost-of-living pressure, insecure housing, mental health challenges, social disconnection, climate concern and uncertainty about work and education.

This reinforces the need for a) an intergenerational focus in policy making to signal to young people that governments are safeguarding secure and meaningful futures for them, b) providing support to young people to develop the confidence and skills to navigate what lies ahead and c) targeting support to young people who are more likely to feel less confident and/or experience more barriers to work, study and secure housing.



2. OVERVIEW

Findings

Young people have clear hopes for their futures.

Their biggest hopes include:



59%
employment
and career goals



46%
family and
relationships



45%
financial security,
wealth or owning
a home.

More than four in ten young people do not feel positive about their future.



While 58% felt positively about the future, marked differences were evident among gender diverse young people, young people experiencing mental health challenges, disability and those already not engaged in either work or study.



Confidence in navigating the future varies, particularly when it comes to housing.

While young people largely felt confident in managing future challenges, only 53% overall felt confident that they would afford a safe place to live in the future.

Future outlook and confidence are closely linked to mental health and wellbeing.

Young people with both a less positive future outlook and low confidence were



5X as likely to report high
psychological distress
(45% versus 9%)

AND



more than 4X
as likely to experience
loneliness (37% versus 9%)
as those with neither.



Young people facing challenges across multiple areas of their lives are less positive and confident about their futures.

Almost three quarters (74%) of young people experiencing no difficulties across education and employment, relationships, finances and housing had both a positive future outlook and higher confidence, compared with just 12% of those experiencing difficulties across all four areas.

Recommendations

These findings highlight the need for action that goes beyond simply building young people's skills and confidence. Creating a more secure and positive future also requires policies, opportunities and supports that address the broader circumstances shaping their lives.



1. Safeguard young people's futures through policy.

Embed an intergenerational perspective in economic, housing, climate, education and health policies, and involve young people in decisions affecting their futures.



2. Strengthen young people's skills, capabilities and confidence.

Invest in practical supports that help young people navigate education, employment, financial decisions, housing and healthcare, alongside opportunities for social connection and belonging.



3. Prioritise young people experiencing disadvantage.

Address financial hardship, housing insecurity and barriers to education, employment and mental health support, with coordinated services for young people experiencing multiple forms of exclusion.



3. ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report focuses on three key questions:

1 What are young people's biggest hopes for the future?

2 How do young people feel about the future, and how confident are they in navigating what lies ahead?

3 How are young people's current circumstances related to how they see and feel equipped for their future?



The Mission Australia *Youth Survey* questions and items used to explore these are detailed in the Appendix.

All percentages presented in this report are weighted by state, gender and socioeconomic advantage/disadvantage to better reflect the Australian population of young people aged 14-19 years. Further detail about weighting and analysis are also provided in the Appendix.

4. BACKGROUND

Adolescence and young adulthood are formative periods in which young people make decisions and transitions that can shape their later health and wellbeing, education, employment, relationships and participation in society¹. How young people see and feel equipped for their futures is particularly important during this time. Staying engaged in education, pursuing employment and other opportunities, developing relationships and independence, and working towards longer-term goals require young people to be able to imagine a future worth working towards.

Research shows that how young people think about their futures matters. Young people who feel more hopeful during adolescence are more likely to experience positive health, wellbeing and social outcomes as adults². Less hopeful expectations about the future have also been linked with poorer mental health over time, with evidence suggesting that this relationship can work in both directions³. Young people's sense of purpose and support from important adults may also help them develop confidence in their futures and take steps towards their goals.

But young people do not imagine their futures in isolation from the lives they are living now. Their expectations are shaped by their relationships and social environments, as well as the socioeconomic circumstances in which they are growing up^{4,5}. A young person can have clear aspirations for their future while being less certain that they will have the opportunities, resources or support needed to achieve them.

Understanding young people's futures therefore means looking not only at what they hope for, but how they feel about what lies ahead, whether they feel equipped to navigate it, and the circumstances shaping what feels possible.



5. KEY FINDINGS

Young people have clear hopes for the lives they want to build

The 2025 *Youth Survey* asked young people to describe, in their own words, their **biggest hopes for the future***. Their responses reflected aspirations across many areas of life, most commonly⁶:



Employment and career goals

59%

"A career that motivates me, that I will enjoy and work for a long time"
FEMALE, AGED 16, VIC



Family relationships and connections

46%

"Having strong relationships with the people around me"
MALE, AGED 17, TAS



Money, wealth and owning a home

45%

"That I'm able to afford a car and house and provide for myself"
GENDER DIVERSE, AGED 14, NSW



Education and learning

28%

"Achieve a fulfilling and well-rounded education experience"
FEMALE, AGED 17, VIC



Purpose, values and big dreams

26%

"Making a difference in the world through my love of science"
MALE, AGED 16, ACT



Lifestyles and experiences

26%

"Be able to continue my passions/hobbies throughout life"
GENDER DIVERSE, AGED 16, QLD



Physical and mental health

14%

"Continue having mental health support"
FEMALE, AGED 17, SA

* A detailed overview of survey results can be seen in the national *Youth Survey 2025* report⁶, including young people's biggest hopes for their future (presented by gender, state and identification with Indigenous heritage)⁶.

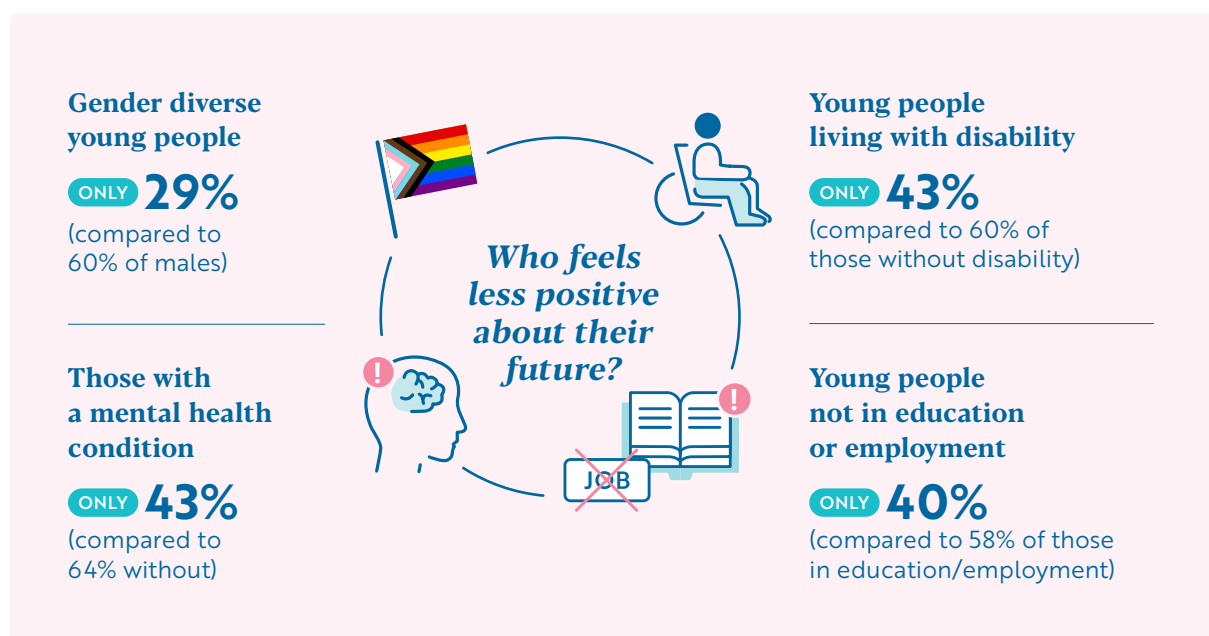
Most young people feel positive about their future – but not everyone

What young people hope for, however, is only part of the picture. To understand how these hopes sit alongside young people's broader sense of the future, we asked them to describe how they feel when they think about what lies ahead. 16,255 young people answered this question (see Table A2 in the Appendix).

Almost 60% of young people reported feeling positive or very positive about the future (58%).

However, feelings about the future differed according to young people's characteristics and circumstances.

The largest difference was seen among **gender diverse** young people, of whom only 29% reported feeling positively about their future, compared with 60% of young people who identified as male and 58% of females. Young people **living with a disability** were also less likely to feel positively about their futures (43% compared with 60% of those without a disability), as were those with a **mental health condition** (43% compared with 64% of those without a mental health condition). Similarly, 40% of young people who were **not engaged in either education or employment** reported feeling positively about their future, compared with 58% of those who were engaged in education and/or employment.



Young people's confidence varies across the challenges ahead

We also asked young people how confident they felt about managing some of the practical and personal challenges they may face as they move towards adulthood (see Figure 1). Again 16,255 young people responded to these questions (see Table A3).

Overall, young people reported feeling most confident that they would know how to make *smart choices about money* (71%), *feel comfortable asking for career advice* (71%) and *manage their own healthcare needs* (68%). Confidence was lower regarding their ability to *handle future stress or problems* (58%), *manage well in a rapidly changing world of work* (55%), and *afford a safe place to live* (53%).

For some young people, the path to adulthood already looks harder.

Again, **gender diverse** young people, young people living with a **disability** or **mental health condition**, and those **not engaged in either education or employment** consistently reported lower confidence in their ability to manage their future lives.

Differences were particularly pronounced among **young people not currently engaged in education or employment**: only 22% reportedly *felt confident they could manage well in a world where jobs and careers are changing rapidly*, and 27% *felt confident handling future stress or problems*, compared with 55% and 58% of young people engaged in either work or study, respectively.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people also reported lower confidence in *making smart choices about money in the future* (62%), *seeking career advice* (62%), and *managing their own healthcare* (60%) than non-Indigenous young people (compared to 72%, 72%, 69% respectively).

And people with a **mental health condition** were less likely to report confidence in *handling future stress or problems* (35%), *affording a safe place to live* (36%) and *managing well in a rapidly changing world of work* (38%) compared to people without a mental health condition (66%, 59% and 61% respectively).

These findings highlight that some young people who may already face greater barriers as they move towards adulthood are also less confident about navigating the practical and personal challenges ahead.

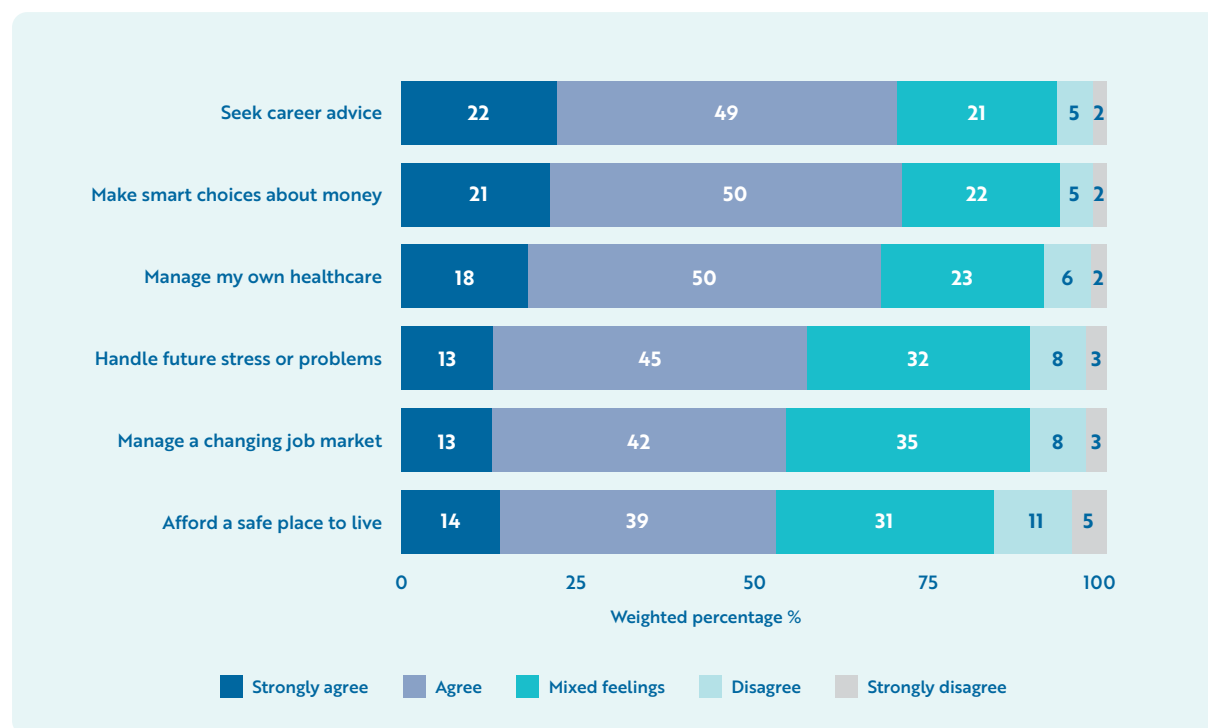


Figure 1. Young people's confidence in navigating key activities in their future

Optimism matters, but young people also need skills and confidence

Among the 15,658 young people who had complete data for both future outlook and confidence, how young people felt about their future was closely related to how confident they felt about navigating it (see Table A3). Of those who felt *positive* or *very positive* about the future, 63% reported high confidence across at least five of the six areas examined, compared with 21% of those who did not feel positive.

However, a positive outlook did not mean that all aspects of the future felt equally within reach. Even among young people who felt *positive* or *very positive*, confidence was lowest in being able to *afford a safe place to live* (68%), compared with *making smart financial choices* (82%), *seeking career advice* (84%), *managing their own healthcare* (82%), *handling future*

stress or problems (74%), and *managing a changing world of work* (71%). **Almost one in three young people who felt positive about their future were therefore still not confident they would be able to afford a safe place to live.**

These findings show that feeling positive about the future and feeling equipped to navigate it are closely connected, but not the same. Young people can have aspirations for their futures, and feel positive about what lies ahead, while remaining uncertain about whether some of the things they need to build those futures will be within reach. Optimism and confidence both matter, but so do the conditions young people face in turning that hope into reality.



Future outlook and confidence are closely connected to young people's lives today

Feeling positive about the future is only one part of the picture. Young people also need to feel confident that they will be able to navigate the practical challenges and opportunities that lie ahead: from *affording safe housing* and *managing money* and *healthcare*, to *making career decisions in an ever changing world*, and *dealing with future challenges*.

We looked at these responses together to identify young people who had a less positive future outlook, lower confidence across these areas, both or neither.

While future outlook and confidence were closely related, young people experienced different combinations of the two. Overall, 42% of young people did *not* feel positive about their future, 11% had low confidence across the areas examined, and 8% had *both* a less positive future outlook and low confidence.

To understand how these differences were related to young people's lives today, we compared young people with a positive future outlook and higher confidence, a less positive future outlook only, low confidence only, and both a less positive future outlook and low confidence. Further detail about how these groups were defined, including the *Youth Survey* questions used, is provided in the Appendix.

Young people's mental health and wellbeing varied by future outlook and confidence.

Across all three indicators examined (see Figure 2), difficulties were least common among young people who felt positive about their future and had higher confidence, and most common among those with both a less positive future outlook and low confidence.

Almost three quarters (73%) of young people in this latter group reported lacking control over their life, compared with 20% of those with a positive future outlook and higher confidence. High psychological distress was also substantially more common (45% compared with 9%), as was loneliness (37% compared with 9%). Young people for whom either future outlook or confidence was lower generally fell between these two groups.

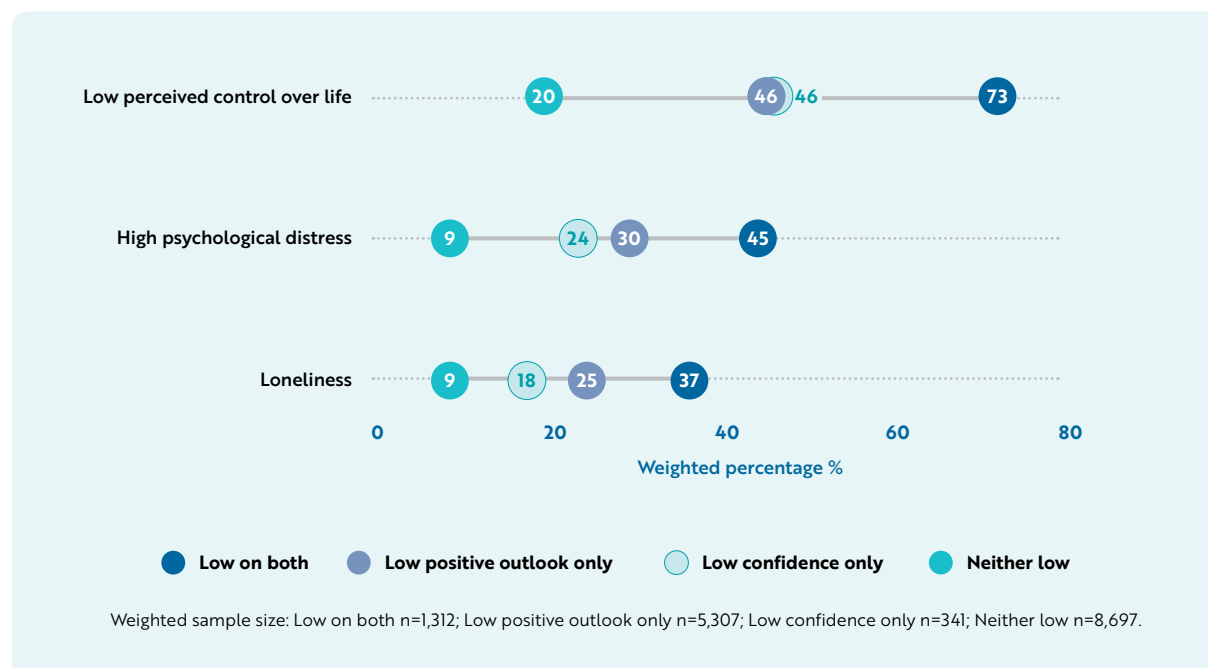


Figure 2. Young people's current wellbeing by future outlook and confidence

Social exclusion is closely connected to how young people feel about their futures

Previous Orygen and Mission Australia research⁷ has shown that young people can experience social exclusion across multiple areas of their lives, including **relational difficulties, financial hardship, housing challenges, and education and employment issues** (see Appendix for variable definitions). Building on this work, we examined how experiences across these four domains differed according to young people’s future outlook and confidence (see Figure 3).

Across each of the indicators examined here, social exclusion was most common among young people who had both a less positive future outlook and low confidence (n=1,312), and least common among those with neither (n=8,697).

The differences were substantial. More than two thirds (69%) of young people with both a less positive future outlook and low confidence reported education and/or employment issues, compared with 28% of those with neither. Relational or social difficulties were reported by 62% compared with 22%, financial stress by 41% compared with 18%, and housing challenges by 18% compared with 5%. Young people with either a less positive future outlook or low confidence generally fell between these two groups.

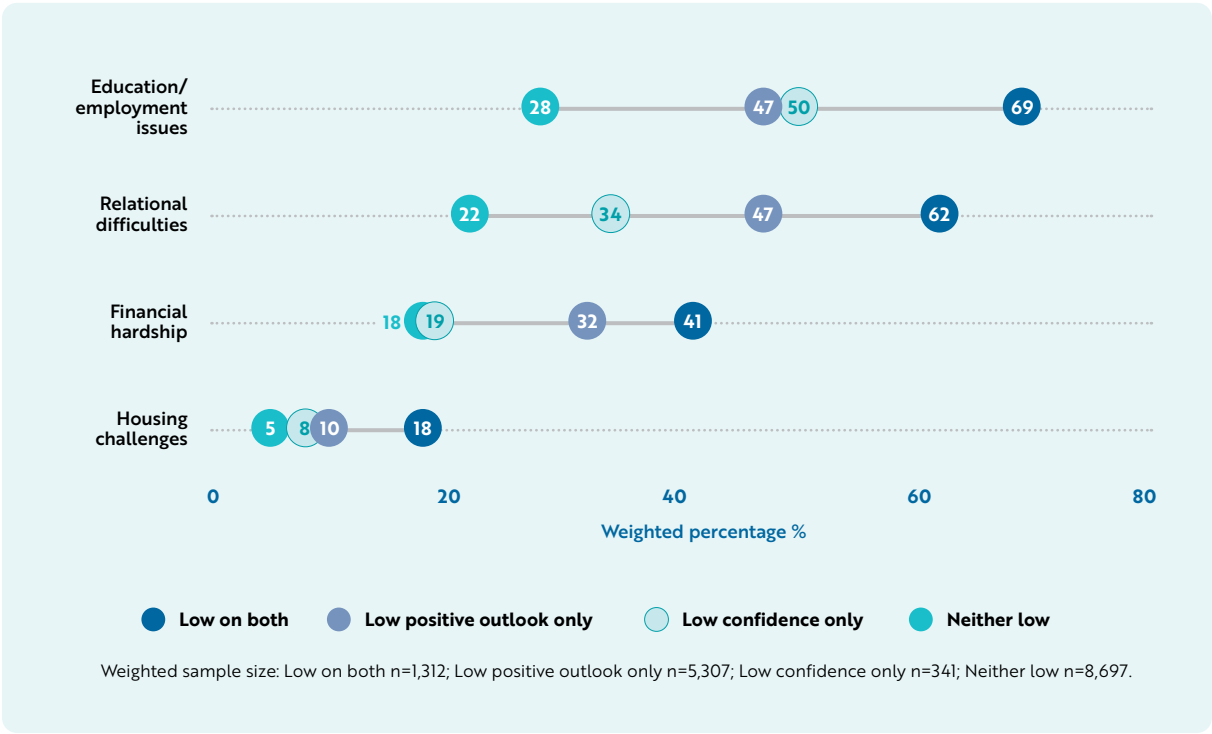


Figure 3. Experiences of social exclusion by future outlook and confidence



The accumulation of social exclusion was also associated with marked differences in how young people viewed and felt equipped for their futures (see Figure 4; sample size was smaller as all responses were required across all four social exclusion domains).

Among young people experiencing none of the four social exclusion indicators examined, almost three quarters (74%) had both a positive future outlook and higher confidence, compared to just 12% of those experiencing all four. The proportion with both a less positive future outlook and low confidence showed

the opposite pattern, increasing from just 2% among those experiencing no indicators of social exclusion to 27% among those experiencing all four.

This pattern highlights the importance of considering the cumulative impact of challenges across different areas of young people's lives. Difficulties with relationships, education, finances and housing may not occur in isolation, and young people experiencing challenges across multiple areas were much less likely to see their future positively and feel confident about navigating it.

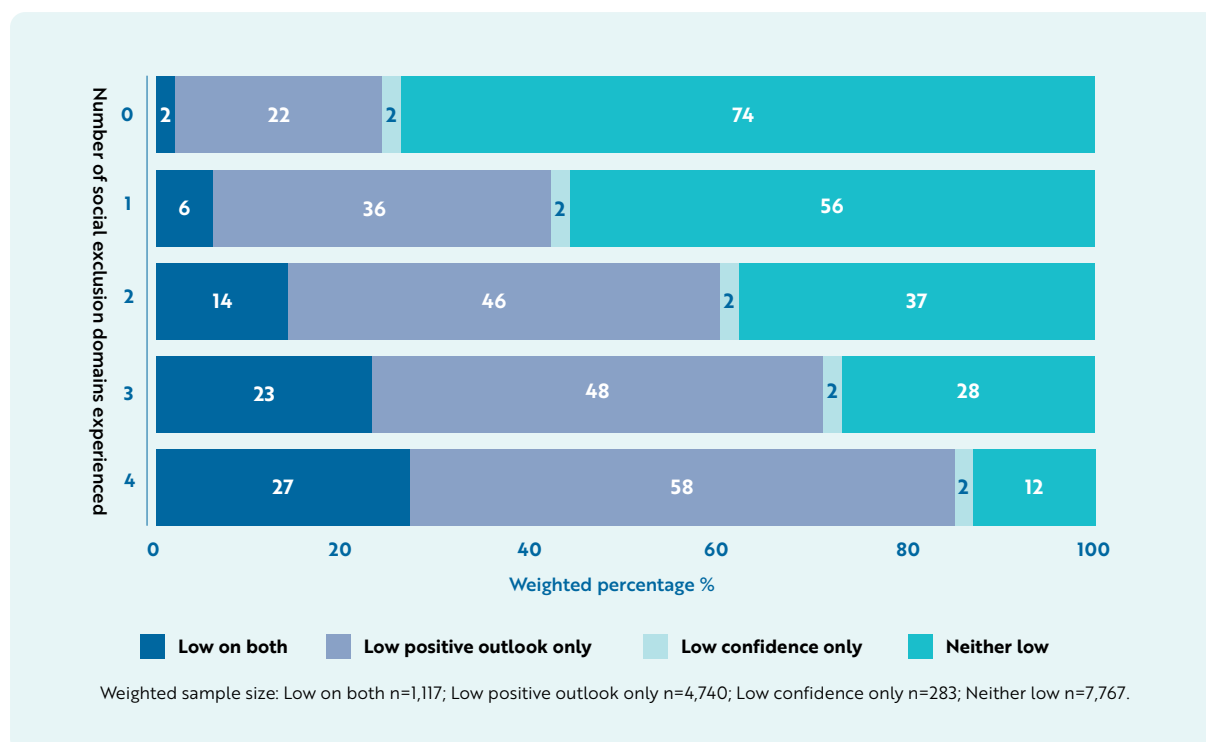


Figure 4. Proportion of young people by social exclusion risk factor x poor future outlook and low confidence

Feeling capable goes hand in hand with a more positive and confident outlook

Young people's sense that they could manage challenges, achieve their goals and do things well was closely related to both their future outlook and their confidence across key areas of future life. Young people with a more positive future outlook and higher confidence were substantially more likely to feel capable across all five areas examined (see Figure 5). More than eight in ten agreed or strongly agreed that they could *deal with things that happen in their lives* (87%), *get along well with others* (87%), *achieve their goals even if hard* (83%), and *do things as well as most other people* (81%), while 76% reported feeling good about themselves.

The picture was markedly different for young people who had both a less positive *future outlook* and *lower confidence*. Fewer than one in five agreed or strongly agreed that they felt *able to do things as well as most other people* (18%) or *achieve their goals even if hard* (17%), while only 22% felt *able to deal with things that happen in their lives*. Only 15% felt good about themselves, while 31% felt they got along well with others. Young people who had either a less positive future outlook or lower confidence generally fell between these two groups.

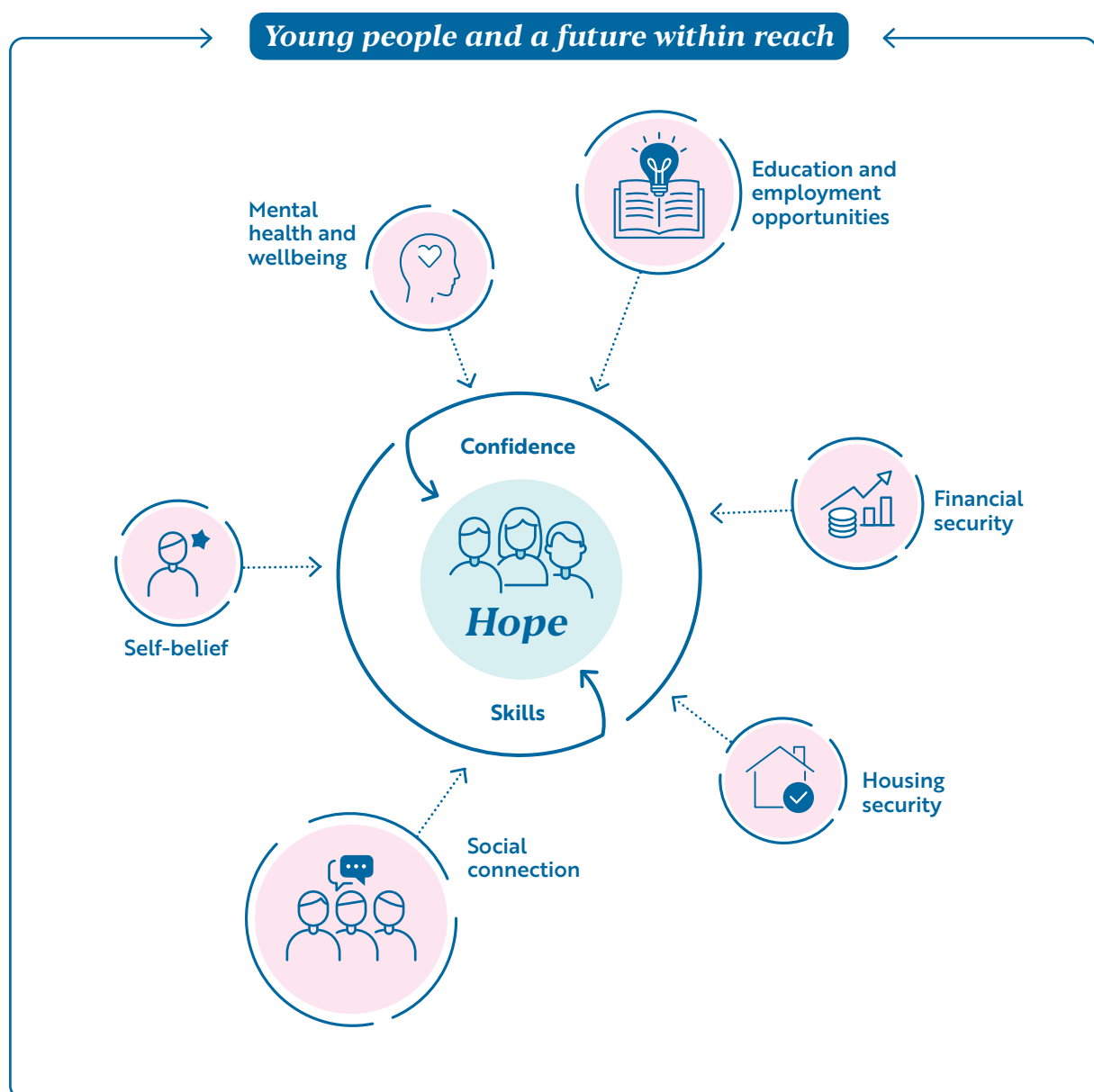


Figure 5. How capable young people feel by future outlook and confidence

Because these data were collected at one point in time, we cannot determine the direction of these relationships. Feeling more capable may contribute to a more positive future outlook and greater confidence about what lies ahead, while feeling positive and confident about the future may also shape how capable young people feel in the present. These experiences may also reinforce one another over time.

What the findings do show is a close connection between how capable young people feel today and how they see and approach their future. This

points to an important opportunity for action: helping young people build the practical skills, knowledge and capabilities they need to manage challenges, pursue their goals and navigate the transition to adulthood. But building capability is not only about equipping young people with skills. They also need the resources, support and opportunities to put those skills into practice. Strengthening young people's capabilities today may be one way to help them approach the future with greater confidence and a more positive outlook.



6. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Building hope and confidence among young people should be seen as a structural, not just individual, responsibility.

The findings of this analysis point to three policy priorities for strengthening young people's confidence in the future:

1 Embed an intergenerational lens in policy development.

While most young people remain positive about their future, confidence is lower when it comes to affording a safe place to live, navigating a changing world of work and managing future challenges.

Governments should explicitly consider the long-term impacts of economic, housing, climate, education and health policy on young people, signalling that their futures are being safeguarded.

Embedding an intergenerational lens can help ensure policy decisions made today support young people's ability to build the future they want.



Recommendations:

- Include young people in policy development to ensure their future concerns are understood and addressed
- Include youth-reported future confidence as an indicator of whether policy is improving young people's hope for the future and sense of security

2 Strengthen young people's capability and confidence.

Young people with greater confidence in their ability to manage challenges and achieve their goals are more likely to report a positive outlook on their future.

Investing in skills, supportive relationships and pathways to help can strengthen young people's capacity to navigate the transition to adulthood.

Programs are needed to support young people to build the skills, resources and confidence to navigate transitions into adulthood, including work, study, housing, relationships and mental health care.



Recommendations:

- Invest in transition supports from school to further education, work and adulthood (such as career guidance, vocational pathways, independent living and financial management skills)
- Invest in programs that build social connection and belonging for young people such as peer programs, youth spaces, inclusive education settings, community participation, cultural connection and digital inclusion
- Strengthen the connection between schools and their local service systems to better facilitate early identification of young people in need and referral pathways to support

3 Target support to young people facing the greatest barriers.

The report identifies significant inequalities in future confidence, with some groups of young people facing multiple and compounding barriers to housing, wellbeing, social connection and participation.

Targeted investment and integrated support can help address these barriers and ensure all young people have equitable opportunities to thrive.



Recommendations:

- Raise the rate of income support including youth allowance to reduce financial stress and distress for young people
- Prioritise the development of housing for young people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, supported by youth-focused housing pathways, early intervention and integrated supported accommodation models
- Actively address silos in policy and service provision to ensure holistic support is provided to young people experiencing multiple and compounding forms of exclusion
- Ensure that young people experiencing serious mental health issues are able to access evidence-based youth specific mental health services which include clinical and psychosocial/vocational care

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8. APPENDIX: TABLE OF VARIABLES AND STATISTICAL METHODS

Table A1. Variable definitions and items from the 2025 Youth Survey

VARIABLE	DEFINITION
Demographics	
Age	Continuous, 14-19 years; also categorised as 14-16 years and 17-19 years.
Gender identity	Categorised as male, female, or gender diverse (combining agender/non-gendered, transgender, non-binary, intersex, and other).
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	Self-identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
Culturally and linguistically diverse status (CALD)	Defined as speaking a language other than English at home or identifying with a non-European, non-Indigenous ethnic background, including East Asian, Southeast Asian, South Asian, African, Central/South American, West/Central Asian, Middle Eastern, or Polynesian backgrounds.
Remoteness area	Classified using the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) remoteness structure based on postcode: major cities, inner regional, and outer regional/remote (combining outer regional, remote, and very remote).
Socioeconomic status	SEIFA socio-economic indexes (Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage, IRSAD) for areas based on postcode, categorised as low (deciles 1-4), medium (deciles 5-7), and high (deciles 8-10).
Not currently in education, employment, or training (NEET)	Coded as NEET if not currently studying, nor in paid work.

VARIABLE	DEFINITION
Socioeconomic and living circumstances	
Financial hardship	Derived from self-reported financial hardship and family financial concerns. Coded Yes if either self-reported financial hardship OR family financial concern is present. Financial hardship was defined as affirmative responses to at least one of the following experiences because the participant or their family couldn't afford it: "Couldn't access mental health support", "Couldn't pay rent/mortgage", "Couldn't buy clothes/other essential items", "Missed at least one meal in the day", "Couldn't get medical treatment/medicine", "Couldn't participate in activities, hobbies or groups", "Couldn't pay for school uniform, supplies, excursions or fees", or "Other". Family financial concerns were defined as strongly agreeing or agreeing with the statement: "My family are often stressed about money".
Disability status	Self-reported disability using question: "Do you have a disability? Our definition of disability is if you have a limitation, restriction or impairment, which has lasted, or is likely to last for at least six months and restricts everyday activities". Responses include "Yes", "No", or "Prefer not to say".
Mental health condition	Self-reported mental health condition using question: "Do you have a mental health condition? Our definition of mental health condition is a type of condition that can affect your thoughts, mood and/or behaviour". Responses include "Yes", "No", or "Prefer not to say".
Housing challenges	Coded as Yes if the respondent experienced homelessness in the last year ("Have you and/or your family experienced a time you were homeless in the last year?") or struggled to find or keep a place to live in the last year ("If you answered no to experiencing homelessness, did you and/or your family ever struggle to find or keep a place to live in the last year?"). A "Yes" response to either question includes "Yes, only me" and "Yes, with my family/someone else".
Relational difficulties	Coded as Yes if the respondent reported "No" to "Do you find it easy to fit in and socialise with everyone?", or "Do you find it easy to turn to friends and family if you need help?"
Education/employment issues	Coded as Yes if the respondent reported "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", or "Mixed feelings" to "I like my school" OR is coded as NEET (not currently studying and not in paid work).

VARIABLE	DEFINITION
Hope	
Future outlook	Defined based on the question "How would you describe your feelings when you think about the future?" Positive/high future outlook is defined as reporting "Positive" or "Very positive". Negative/low future outlook is defined as reporting "Neither positive nor negative", "Negative", or "Very negative".
Confidence (6 items)	Defined based on the question "How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?", rated on a five-point scale ("Strongly disagree", "Disagree", "Mixed feelings", "Agree", "Strongly agree") to each of the 6 statements: 1. "I'm confident I'll be able to afford a safe place to live in the future" 2. "I believe I'll know how to make smart choices about money in the future" 3. "I feel comfortable asking for advice about job opportunities or choosing a career path" 4. "I feel confident I'll be able to manage my healthcare needs on my own in the future, like finding doctors and booking appointments" 5. "I feel confident in my ability to handle any future stress or problems I might face" 6. "I think I can manage well in a world where jobs and careers are changing rapidly" High confidence is defined as agreeing or strongly agreeing with at least 5 of the 6 statements. This threshold was used to identify young people who consistently expressed high confidence across the different areas.
Future outlook × confidence grouping	Cross-classifies future outlook and confidence. "Low positive outlook" is defined as responding "Neither positive nor negative", "Negative", or "Very negative" to "How would you describe your feelings when you think about the future?". "Low confidence" was defined here more conservatively, as responding "Strongly disagree", "Disagree", or "Mixed feelings" to all 6 confidence statements described above. This threshold allowed us to identify young people who did not report confidence in <i>any</i> of the 6 areas examined. Groups: "Low on both"/"Low positive outlook only"/"Low confidence only"/"Neither low". Requires all items answered.

VARIABLE	DEFINITION
Wellbeing	
Lack of perceived control over life	Self-reported sense of control over life ("How much control do you feel you have over your life?"). Coded as Yes if respondent reported "Some control", "Almost no control", or "No control", coded as No if respondent reported "Mostly in control" or "Complete control".
Loneliness	Self-reported experience of loneliness ("In the last four weeks, how much of the time did you feel lonely?"). Coded as Yes if respondent reported feeling lonely "most of the time" or "all of the time".
High psychological distress	Measured using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale – 6 item version (K6). Six items rated on a five-point scale: none of the time (1), a little of the time (2), some of the time (3), most of the time (4), all of the time (5), summed to a total score ranging from 6-30. Coded as High psychological distress if score ≥ 19 .
Capability statements (5 items)	Each coded as Yes if the respondent reported "Agree" or "Strongly agree" to: "I am able to do things as well as most other people"; "I can achieve my goals even if they are hard"; "I can deal with things that happen in my life"; "I feel good about myself"; "I think I get along with others."



Statistical methods

This report draws on 17,155 respondents aged 14-19 years to the 2025 Mission Australia *Youth Survey*. Data was weighted to make the sample representative of 14-19-year-olds by gender, location (state/territory based on postcodes), and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) developed Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas for 2021 (SEIFA) (ABS, 2023). Gender and location correspond to the ABS's Estimated Residential Population (ERP) statistics for December 2024 (ABS, 2025), as it provides year-on-year figures. The *Youth Survey* uses Random iterative method (RIM) weighting, which balances the marginal distributions of each weighting element one after the other, repeating until all factors are within a reasonable margin of the target. All proportions reported in this report were weighted using this population weight.

All analyses were conducted using R version 4.5.2

(2025-10-31). Descriptive statistics and graphical visualisations were used to summarise participant characteristics and to examine differences in future outlook, confidence, and wellbeing across groups of young people. Differences in characteristics across groups were tested using chi-squared tests adjusted for survey weights. A p-value below 0.05 was considered statistically significant. All tables and figures are complete-case per variable. A respondent missing a given item is excluded from that item's percentage. No imputation is used in this report. Sample characteristics are reported as weighted counts and weighted percentages by group, reflecting the population weighting described above.

Table A2. Characteristics of young people by feeling about the future

CHARACTERISTIC	POSITIVE/ VERY POSITIVE	NEITHER POSITIVE NOR NEGATIVE/ NEGATIVE/ VERY NEGATIVE	OVERALL
	N = 9,410	N = 6,845	N = 16,255
Gender identity			
Male	4,768 (60%)	3,177 (40%)	7,945 (50%)
Female	4,441 (58%)	3,245 (42%)	7,686 (48%)
Gender diverse	101 (29%)	250 (71%)	351 (2.2%)
Missing	100	172	272
Socioeconomic disadvantage category			
Low (Deciles 1-4)	3,473 (57%)	2,635 (43%)	6,109 (40%)
Medium (Deciles 5-7)	2,241 (56%)	1,765 (44%)	4,006 (26%)
High (Deciles 8-10)	3,112 (62%)	1,921 (38%)	5,033 (33%)
Missing	583	524	1,107
Remoteness area			
Major Cities	4,420 (58%)	3,149 (42%)	7,569 (50%)
Inner Regional	2,312 (58%)	1,685 (42%)	3,997 (26%)
Outer Regional/Remote/Very Remote	2,094 (58%)	1,487 (42%)	3,581 (24%)

CHARACTERISTIC	POSITIVE/ VERY POSITIVE	NEITHER POSITIVE NOR NEGATIVE/ NEGATIVE/ VERY NEGATIVE	OVERALL
	N = 9,410	N = 6,845	N = 16,255
Missing	583	524	1,107
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status			
Non-Indigenous	8,606 (58%)	6,184 (42%)	14,790 (94%)
Indigenous	446 (51%)	421 (49%)	867 (5.5%)
Missing	357	240	598
Culturally and linguistically diverse status			
Not CALD	5,033 (60%)	3,389 (40%)	8,422 (58%)
CALD	3,465 (56%)	2,739 (44%)	6,204 (42%)
Missing	912	717	1,629
Age group			
Age 14-16 yo	6,335 (58%)	4,533 (42%)	10,868 (67%)
Age 17-19 yo	3,074 (57%)	2,312 (43%)	5,386 (33%)
Disability status			
No	8,050 (60%)	5,320 (40%)	13,370 (86%)
Yes	686 (43%)	921 (57%)	1,606 (10%)
Prefer not to say	272 (47%)	309 (53%)	581 (3.7%)
Missing	402	294	696
Mental health condition			
No	7,375 (64%)	4,121 (36%)	11,496 (74%)
Yes	1,019 (43%)	1,374 (57%)	2,393 (15%)
Prefer not to say	618 (37%)	1,059 (63%)	1,677 (11%)
Missing	398	291	688
Not in education, employment or training (NEET)			
Not NEET	9,322 (58%)	6,738 (42%)	16,060 (99%)
NEET	44 (40%)	68 (60%)	112 (0.7%)
Missing	43	39	82

All characteristics shown were significant ($p < .05$), except for Remoteness area and Age group.

Note: Percentages in the outcome columns are row percentages; percentages in Overall column are column percentages.

Table A3. Characteristics of future confidence and future outlook

CHARACTERISTIC	POSITIVE/ VERY POSITIVE	NEITHER POSITIVE NOR NEGATIVE/ NEGATIVE/ VERY NEGATIVE	OVERALL
	N = 9,410	N = 6,845	N = 16,255
Afford a safe place to live	6,332 (68%)	2,148 (32%)	8,479 (53%)
Make smart choices about money	7,633 (82%)	3,848 (57%)	11,481 (72%)
Seek career advice	7,750 (84%)	3,661 (54%)	11,411 (71%)
Manage my own healthcare	7,597 (82%)	3,440 (51%)	11,037 (69%)
Handle future stress or problems	6,875 (74%)	2,378 (35%)	9,252 (58%)
Manage a changing job market	6,571 (71%)	2,264 (34%)	8,835 (55%)

Table A4. Sample characteristics of future outlook and confidence among young people

CHARACTERISTIC	LOW ON BOTH	LOW POSITIVE OUTLOOK ONLY	LOW CONFIDENCE ONLY	NEITHER LOW	OVERALL
	N = 1,312	N = 5,307	N = 341	N = 8,697	N = 15,658
Gender identity					
Male	622 (8.1%)	2,456 (32%)	200 (2.6%)	4,364 (57%)	7,642 (50%)
Female	529 (7.1%)	2,607 (35%)	121 (1.6%)	4,164 (56%)	7,422 (48%)
Gender diverse	94 (28%)	144 (43%)	5 (1.4%)	91 (27%)	334 (2.2%)
Missing	66	101	15	77	260
Socioeconomic disadvantage category					
Low (Deciles 1-4)	532 (9.0%)	2,025 (34%)	147 (2.5%)	3,200 (54%)	5,904 (40%)
Medium (Deciles 5-7)	320 (8.3%)	1,394 (36%)	68 (1.8%)	2,074 (54%)	3,855 (26%)
High (Deciles 8-10)	333 (6.9%)	1,520 (31%)	103 (2.1%)	2,895 (60%)	4,850 (33%)
Missing	128	368	23	529	1,048
Remoteness area					
Major Cities	561 (7.7%)	2,481 (34%)	140 (1.9%)	4,110 (56%)	7,293 (50%)
Inner Regional	342 (8.9%)	1,302 (34%)	82 (2.1%)	2,131 (55%)	3,857 (26%)
Outer Regional/ Remote/Very Remote	281 (8.1%)	1,156 (33%)	95 (2.8%)	1,927 (56%)	3,460 (24%)
Missing	128	368	23	529	1,048

CHARACTERISTIC	LOW ON BOTH	LOW POSITIVE OUTLOOK ONLY	LOW CONFIDENCE ONLY	NEITHER LOW	OVERALL
	N = 1,312	N = 5,307	N = 341	N = 8,697	N = 15,658
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander status					
Non-Indigenous	1,153 (8.1%)	4,837 (34%)	298 (2.1%)	7,975 (56%)	14,264 (94%)
Indigenous	102 (12%)	304 (37%)	30 (3.7%)	396 (48%)	833 (5.5%)
Missing	58	166	12	326	562
Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) status					
Not CALD	567 (6.9%)	2,746 (34%)	144 (1.8%)	4,727 (58%)	8,184 (58%)
CALD	536 (9.0%)	2,108 (35%)	138 (2.3%)	3,201 (54%)	5,983 (42%)
Missing	209	454	59	769	1,491
Age group					
Age 14-16 yo	825 (7.9%)	3,564 (34%)	225 (2.1%)	5,852 (56%)	10,465 (67%)
Age 17-19 yo	488 (9.4%)	1,744 (34%)	116 (2.2%)	2,845 (55%)	5,193 (33%)
Disability status					
No	904 (7.0%)	4,275 (33%)	247 (1.9%)	7,512 (58%)	12,939 (86%)
Yes	235 (15%)	658 (42%)	35 (2.2%)	629 (40%)	1,557 (10%)
Prefer not to say	95 (17%)	201 (36%)	26 (4.7%)	236 (42%)	558 (3.7%)
Missing	77	174	32	320	603
Mental health condition					
No	645 (5.8%)	3,366 (30%)	234 (2.1%)	6,877 (62%)	11,122 (74%)
Yes	300 (13%)	1,035 (45%)	39 (1.7%)	942 (41%)	2,316 (15%)
Prefer not to say	292 (18%)	735 (45%)	35 (2.1%)	566 (35%)	1,628 (11%)
Missing	76	171	33	312	592
Not in education, employment or training (NEET)					
Not NEET	1,273 (8.2%)	5,247 (34%)	337 (2.2%)	8,624 (56%)	15,481 (99%)
NEET	32 (32%)	33 (32%)	4 (3.4%)	33 (33%)	102 (0.7%)
Missing	7	28	0	40	75

All were statistically significant ($p < .05$), except for Remoteness area, Age group. Note: Percentages in the outcome columns are row percentages; percentages in Overall column are column percentages.

Table A5. Weighted prevalence of risk factor across outlook X confidence groups

FACTOR	LOW ON BOTH	LOW POSITIVE OUTLOOK ONLY	LOW CONFIDENCE ONLY	NEITHER LOW
High psychological distress	44.7%	30.4%	24%	8.8%
Low perceived control over life	72.5%	46.4%	46.2%	19.5%
Loneliness	37%	25.2%	18%	8.6%
Relational difficulties	61.7%	47.5%	33.6%	21.7%
Housing challenges	17.7%	10.3%	7.5%	4.7%
Financial hardship	41.5%	32.4%	19.2%	18.5%
Education/employment issues	69%	46.6%	50.1%	28.5%

Table A6. Weighted prevalence of social exclusion domains across outlook X confidence groups

SOCIAL EXCLUSION DOMAINS COUNT (0-4)	LOW ON BOTH	LOW POSITIVE OUTLOOK ONLY	LOW CONFIDENCE ONLY	NEITHER LOW
0	2.4%	21.9%	1.6%	74.1%
1	6%	36%	2.5%	55.5%
2	14.5%	46%	2.3%	37.3%
3	22.8%	47.9%	1.5%	27.8%
4	27.1%	58.3%	2.2%	12.4%

Table A7. Weighted prevalence of how capable young people feel, per item, across outlook X confidence groups

FACTOR	LOW ON BOTH	LOW POSITIVE OUTLOOK ONLY	LOW CONFIDENCE ONLY	NEITHER LOW
Able to do things well	18.4%	52.4%	48.6%	81.3%
Able to achieve goals	17.1%	50.2%	50%	83.2%
Able to deal with things	21.6%	61.2%	53.5%	86.9%
Feel good about self	14.9%	40.2%	45.8%	75.7%
Get along with others	31.2%	68.4%	59.3%	87%



MISSION AUSTRALIA

Who is Mission Australia?

At Mission Australia, we believe in hope and possibility for all.

As a national non-denominational Christian charity with more than 165 years of experience, we are one of Australia's largest and most trusted for-purpose community service and housing providers.

Every day, we deliver homelessness services, provide social and affordable housing, help families, children and young people thrive, improve mental health and wellbeing, support people with disability, provide pathways to employment and financial stability, strengthen communities, offer alcohol and other drug support, and more.

Backed by our supporters, partners, funders and collaborators, we welcome people and communities of all backgrounds, ages and beliefs who seek our support, providing excellent services and safe, secure homes that offer hope and lasting impact. Together, we're building hope and possibility for all.



Who is Orygen?

Leading the revolution in youth mental health

At Orygen, we believe that every young person deserves to grow into adulthood with optimal mental health. Everything we do is focused on delivering this outcome.

Orygen is Australia's Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health and the world's leading research and knowledge translation organisation focused on mental ill-health in young people.

We believe in treating early and focusing on recovery. Pioneering reform to deliver real-world practical solutions. Our research is world-leading, impactful and creates change. Working directly with young people, their families and friends, we pioneer new, positive approaches to the prevention and treatment of mental disorders.

We advocate to make sure that policy makers understand the need and cost of mental ill-health in young people.

And we educate to ensure our research and evidence-based practice is used to develop innovative training programs and resources.

Our goal is to see all young people with mental ill-health get well and stay well.

Contact Mission Australia

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If you are a young person and need
someone to talk with, you can contact

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800 (24/7)

Kidshelpline.com.au