



Mission Australia

National Youth Survey 2005: Rural and Regional Responses

Snapshot
2006



Introduction

In 2005, Mission Australia conducted its fourth national survey of young Australians, aged 11-24 years. The survey's primary purpose was to identify and clarify the key and emerging issues of young people. The survey was distributed to secondary schools and other educational institutions, libraries, youth services and organisations and through a range of Mission Australia's corporate partners. It was also available on the Mission Australia website.

For the first time, the 2005 Youth Survey asked respondents whether they lived in a capital city (Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Darwin, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth or Sydney). This snapshot provides information from the survey, analysed by metropolitan and non-metropolitan location.

Where do young Australians live?

Sixty four percent of Australians (12.7 million) live in capital cities, a trend that is also evident among young people. At the 2001 Census, around two in every three young people aged 15-24 years lived in a capital city (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2003).

Table 1: Location of 15-24 year olds (2001 Census)

	('000)	%
Capital cities	1,707.4	66.7
Large population centres	441.9	17.3
Country areas	408.4	16.0
Total	2,557.7	100.0

Source: ABS Social Trends 2003

Table 3: What young people value by location and age

	Outside capital city %			Capital city %		
	11-14 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	11-14 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs
Family relationships	75.3	71.0	67.5	75.8	74.1	63.2
Friendships/relationships	66.6	67.3	54.8	70.1	71.6	60.2
Being independent	34.2	39.8	40.4	31.0	36.4	37.3
Feeling needed and valued	26.4	30.2	35.5	30.6	33.2	36.5
School or study satisfaction	24.6	19.6	7.2	25.8	22.8	10.7
Getting a job	23.0	19.8	24.1	13.4	13.1	22.2
Financial security	12.2	19.4	33.1	11.0	16.3	30.2
Spirituality/faith	13.9	14.5	19.9	17.5	14.7	21.9
Peer acceptance	14.6	10.6	8.4	16.4	11.1	6.7
Environmental issues	9.9	8.2	9.0	9.2	7.1	11.2

Note: Data is aggregated and includes items ranked one, two or three by respondents

Where did respondents to the Youth Survey live?

Almost 11,300 young people responded to the 2005 Mission Australia Youth Survey. A high proportion of them, just under half, lived outside a capital city. Table 2 shows that compared to the other states and territories, a significant proportion of Queensland and Tasmanian respondents lived outside of Brisbane and Hobart respectively.

Table 2: Proportion of respondents by location

State/Territory	Outside capital city %	Capital city %
ACT & NSW	32.2	67.8
NT	25.4	74.6
QLD	83.0	17.0
SA	47.6	52.4
TAS	63.6	36.4
VIC	52.3	47.7
WA	43.5	56.5
National	46.9	53.1

What do young people value?

The survey asked young people to rank what they valued from a list of options. Table 3 shows the responses were very similar, regardless of where respondents lived, with the top three items of *family relationships*, *friendships* and *being independent* being identical. These first two are very 'people centred', with items such as *getting a job* or *financial security* being valued highly by lower proportions of respondents. The similarity in the top items, regardless of location, is an important finding of this research.

There was a major difference, by location, in the proportion of respondents who placed a high value on *getting a job*. It was important for a much higher proportion of the two younger age groups who were living outside a capital city compared to their capital city counterparts.

- 23.0% of 11-14 year olds and 19.8% of 15-19 year olds living outside a capital city ranked *getting a job* as one of the top three items they valued, compared with just over 13% of respondents in both age groups who lived in a capital city.

Generally, youth unemployment tends to be higher in non-metropolitan areas. In all states, except South Australia and Tasmania, the unemployment rate for 15-24 year olds living in capital cities in August 2005 was between 3 to 5 per cent lower than for their non-metro counterparts (ABS 2005). This may partly explain the higher proportion of younger survey respondents living outside a capital city who indicated *getting a job* was significant. However the similarity between the responses of both groups of 20-24 year olds suggests additional factors, such as young adults relocating for work, may be involved.

Comparing the states

A comparison of capital city and non-capital city data for each state reveals the following differences:

New South Wales

- *Being independent* was valued highly by 32.6% of respondents from Sydney compared to 21.5% of those from the rest of New South Wales.
- 20.2% of respondents from outside of Sydney valued *getting a job* highly compared with 12.0% of those from Sydney.

Queensland

- *Family relationships* and *friendships* were both valued by around 10% more of respondents who lived outside of Brisbane compared with those living in the capital.
- *Feeling needed and valued* and *spirituality* were valued by 10% more of respondents from Brisbane compared with those from the rest of the state.

South Australia

- There were only slight differences between respondents living in Adelaide and those who lived in the rest of South Australia.
- *Financial security* and *getting a job* were important for around 5% more of those living outside of Adelaide.

Tasmania

- 42.1% of respondents from Hobart valued *being independent* highly compared with 32.3% from outside of Hobart.
- *Spirituality/faith* was ranked highly by twice as many respondents from outside Hobart compared with those from the rest of Tasmania (23.4% compared to 12.0%).

Victoria

- There were only small differences between respondents living in Melbourne and those who lived in the rest of Victoria.
- *Being independent* was highly valued by 7% more respondents from outside of Melbourne, whilst *friendships/relationships* was valued by 8% more of those living in Melbourne.

Western Australia

- *Getting a job* was important for 21.2% of those living outside of Perth compared to 12.1% of those from the capital.
- *Friendships/relationships* was ranked highly by 76.8% of respondents from Perth and 68% of those from the rest of Western Australia.

What issues are important/of concern to young people?

The 2005 National Youth Survey asked young people to rank their top issues of importance/concern. Table 4 compares their responses by age and location and highlights that the major differences tended to be among the 20-24 year old age groups.

Table 4: Issues of importance/concern by location and age

	Outside capital city %			Capital city %		
	11-14 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	11-14 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs
Alcohol & other drug issues	42.3	32.0	34.5	38.5	26.5	23.9
Bullying/emotional abuse	33.8	31.7	33.1	33.6	28.1	23.3
Coping with stress	25.9	34.6	36.6	27.6	34.2	48.0
Depression	26.4	35.9	40.2	27.9	37.5	51.5
Discrimination	15.6	19.2	27.6	17.7	22.9	25.9
Family conflict	35.6	34.5	28.8	37.2	34.4	30.2
Physical/sexual abuse	38.9	36.1	40.5	38.3	38.5	34.7
School or study problems	25.7	24.2	13.5	25.8	26.2	17.6
Sexuality	14.4	11.8	12.9	10.2	10.7	16.0
Suicide/self harm	42.4	41.4	33.7	44.2	41.7	30.7

Note: Data is aggregated and includes items ranked one, two or three by respondents

- *Depression and coping with stress* were a significant concern for a high proportion of both groups of 20-24 year olds. However, this was particularly the case for those living in a capital city (51.2% compared to 40.2%).
- *Physical/sexual abuse* concerned a higher proportion of 20-24 year olds living outside a capital city (40.5% compared with 34.7%).

The issue of *alcohol and other drugs* was more of a concern for all age groups living in non-metropolitan areas.

- *Alcohol and other drugs* was a major issue of concern for 36.6% of all respondents from non-metropolitan areas compared with 30.8% of those from capital cities.

The higher level of concern about alcohol among young respondents in non-metropolitan areas is supported by Australian research which shows that, whilst the death rate of 15-24 year olds attributed to alcohol has been trending down over the past decade, the non-metropolitan rate remains 1.7 times higher than for metropolitan areas (Chikritzhs et al 2004).

The Youth Survey results indicated a very high level of concern about *suicide and self harm* among young people, regardless of where they lived, with this being the top issue of concern at the aggregate level. Other research shows that whilst the numbers of youth suicides have generally declined since the late 1990s, the incidence tends to increase with distance from metropolitan areas. In 1999-01, the suicide rate among 15-24 years olds in metropolitan areas was 6.4 per 100,000, in rural areas it was 8.8 and in remote areas it was significantly higher at 24.1. In addition, gender is a compounding factor. Young males living in remote areas had rates almost four times that for metro-based males (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2003).

Comparing the states

A comparison of capital city and non-capital city data for each state reveals the following:

New South Wales

- Responses were very similar, regardless of location.

Queensland

- *Suicide/self harm* was an issue for a much higher proportion of respondents living outside of Brisbane (43.1% compared to 31.4%).
- *Coping with stress* and *depression* were ranked in the top three items of concern by a higher proportion of those living in Brisbane (between 8 to 10 per cent difference respectively).

South Australia

- *Coping with stress* was a significant issue for 37.3% of those living outside of Adelaide, compared with 28.2% from the capital.
- *Alcohol and other drugs* was a concern for around 8% more of those living outside of Adelaide.
- *Physical/sexual abuse* was important for 43.2% of those from Adelaide and 36.2% of those from the rest of the state.

Tasmania

- *Alcohol and other drugs* concerned 36.4% of those from outside of Hobart and 25.0% of those living in the capital.
- *Depression* was an important issue for 41.9% of those in Hobart and 34.4% of those from the rest of the state.
- 20.8% of those in Hobart were concerned about *discrimination* compared to 14.9% of those living in the rest of Tasmania.

Victoria

- *Alcohol and other drugs* and *bullying/emotional abuse* concerned much higher proportions of young people living outside of Melbourne (11% and 9% more respectively).
- *Coping with stress* concerned 10% more of young people living in Melbourne.

Western Australia

- As with Victoria, *alcohol and other drugs* and *bullying/emotional abuse* were concerns for around 9% more young people living outside of Perth.
- *Depression* was more of an issue for young people living in Perth, than for the rest of the state (38.2% compared with 27.9%).

Where do young people turn for advice and support when they have a personal problem?

The top three sources of advice and support were consistent both for respondents living in a capital city and those who did not, namely *friends*, *parents*, and *relative/family friend*. Again, the major variation in responses was among the 20-24 year old age groups.

Table 5: Where young people turn for advice and support by location and age

	Outside capital city %			Capital city %		
	11-14 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	11-14 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs
Friend/s	84.7	89.4	91.0	85.0	89.5	84.4
Parent/s	82.3	72.7	67.7	81.1	72.3	71.1
Relative/family friend	69.2	63.4	55.4	67.1	63.9	64.2
Magazines	10.8	13.4	9.5	13.2	13.5	10.9
Internet	10.4	17.8	29.9	11.3	17.1	26.1
School counsellor	13.1	10.7	7.3	10.9	10.0	11.7
Teacher	10.3	10.6	6.0	9.9	9.8	3.1
Community agencies (eg youth worker etc)	7.6	9.0	13.1	9.2	10.8	21.3
Someone else in your community (eg doctor, minister etc)	7.1	9.4	16.4	7.7	9.2	12.1
Telephone helpline	5.4	5.8	4.9	6.3	5.5	4.9

Note: Data is aggregated and includes items ranked one, two or three by respondents

- 20-24 year olds living outside a capital city were less likely to select *relative/family friend* as a major source of advice compared to their contemporaries (55.4% compared to 64.2%).
- They were also much less likely to turn to *community agencies* (13.1% compared to 21.3%). This may reflect a relative scarcity of such agencies in areas outside capital cities or possibly a reluctance to seek professional assistance and potentially risk public scrutiny. They were however more likely to turn to *someone else in the community*, perhaps because they have an established relationship with a family doctor or minister which is less likely to be closely scrutinised.

Comparing the states

A comparison of data for each state reveals the following:

New South Wales

- There was significant similarity between the responses from those living in and outside Sydney.
- A slightly higher proportion of respondents living outside Sydney sought support from *community agencies* (10.5% compared to 7.3%).
- Sydney residents were a little more likely to seek support from a *school counsellor* (11.3% compared to 8.6%).

Queensland

- Those living outside Brisbane showed higher rates of turning to *friends*, *parents* and *relatives* (88.2%, 77.3% and 62.9% compared with 83.4%, 66.3% and 54.0% respectively for those from Brisbane).
- Brisbane respondents were much more likely to use the *internet* and *community agencies* for support (25.9% and 21.7% compared to 14.3% and 10.3% of those from the rest of Queensland).

South Australia

- *Magazines* were an important source of advice for 30.9% of those living in non-metropolitan areas, compared with 22.9% from Adelaide.
- Non-metropolitan respondents also had slightly higher rates of turning to a *relative* (75.9% compared to 71.7% Adelaide respondents).

Tasmania

- *Parents* were important sources of advice and support for more young people who lived outside of Hobart (75.2% compared to 68.9%).
- Otherwise, the Tasmanian responses were very similar, regardless of where they lived.

Victoria

- Respondents living outside Melbourne were more likely to turn to *community agencies* than were their contemporaries (14.4% compared to 9.4% respectively). This was against the national trend.

Western Australia

- Responses were very similar regardless of location.

Involvement in community activities

Young people were asked to identify from a range of options, the activities they were involved in. *Sports* and *clubs/youth groups* were among the top three activities, regardless of where they lived or their age, although participation in sport declined as age increased.

Arts/cultural activities were also very popular, however the involvement rate for young people living outside capital cities was noticeably lower than their contemporaries. A possible explanation may be that access to arts oriented activities is more limited than access to sports in non-metropolitan areas.

Table 6: Involvement in community activities

	Outside capital city %			Capital city %		
	11-14 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs	11-14 yrs	15-19 yrs	20-24 yrs
Sports	71.5	61.4	36.7	78.4	61.0	33.7
Arts/cultural eg drama, music, dance	43.1	34.1	25.5	53.6	40.1	32.4
Clubs/youth groups	31.8	32.5	36.2	30.9	28.8	39.5
Volunteer	17.4	22.8	36.2	15.9	24.3	38.2
Religious	21.8	17.5	15.6	25.5	21.3	18.3
Student Representative Council	10.9	12.8	6.0	9.1	12.8	6.7
Environmental	8.1	6.2	9.5	5.4	5.9	10.1

- 11-14 year olds, regardless of where they lived, were more than twice as likely to be involved in *sports* than 20-24 year olds.
- Involvement in *arts/cultural* activities was between 6% and 9% lower in non-metropolitan areas, depending on age.
- Respondents aged 20-24 years showed a higher level of involvement in *volunteering* than the younger groups, regardless of where they lived.

Comparing the states

A comparison of capital city and non-capital city data for each state reveals the following:

New South Wales

- Involvement in activities in non-metropolitan NSW tended to be on a par or lower than in Sydney.
- Involvement in *sports* was much lower in areas outside of Sydney than in the capital (66.4% and 73.4% respectively).
- *Arts/cultural* activities were also lower in the rest of New South Wales (36.7% compared to 48.3% in Sydney) as was involvement in *religious* activities (19.9% compared to 27.0% in Sydney).

Queensland

- Respondents living outside Brisbane had significantly higher rates of involvement in both *sports* (63.9% compared to 43.9% in Brisbane) and *arts/cultural* activities (40.6% and 29.3% in Brisbane).

South Australia

- Involvement in *sports* was slightly higher among respondents living outside of Adelaide (63.8% compared to 58.8%).
- Those living outside Adelaide were also more involved in *clubs/youth groups* (37.7% and 27.7%) and *volunteering* (23.0% and 18.6%).

Tasmania

- *Sports* were the most popular activity in Tasmania, with those living outside Hobart just slightly less involved (3.4% less) than their contemporaries but more involved in *arts/cultural* activities (6.2% more).

- Non-Hobart respondents had significantly higher rates of involvement in *clubs/youth groups* (39.8% compared to 29.2% in Hobart) and in *religious* activities (24.7% and 10.6% in Hobart).

Victoria

- Victorian respondents were much more involved in *sports* if they lived outside of Melbourne (65.6% and 49.7%).
- Non-metropolitan respondents were less likely to be involved in *arts/cultural* activities (33.0% compared to 40.6% in Melbourne) and *volunteering* (22.6% compared to 28.8% in Melbourne).

Western Australia

- Respondents living outside of the capital had slightly higher rates of involvement in *sports* (67.5% compared to 61.7% of those in Perth).
- Their involvement in *arts/cultural* activities and *volunteering* (40.0% and 18.3% respectively) was below that of young people living in Perth (49.0% and 22.5%).

Summary of findings and policy and practice implications

- The high response rate to the survey from young people living in all parts of Australia shows they are keen to express their views on a variety of issues. This is particularly evident in the large and disproportionate number of responses from those living outside capital cities. Effective policy and service responses for young people need to be shaped by input from young people themselves so it is important that diverse and multiple ways of engaging them are developed.
- The results of the survey highlight the similarities between young people regardless of where they live, particularly on issues such as what they value and where they turn for advice and support. *Friends and parents/family members* were what young people valued most highly and where they turned for advice and support, for both metro and non-metro respondents.
- While the level of similarity was perhaps unexpected, it is important to acknowledge that young people are not

a homogenous group. The survey results also reflect a range of significant differences, sometimes linked to age and sometimes to where young people live. The latter includes both state differences as well as metropolitan and non-metropolitan differences and strategies aimed at meeting the needs of young people need to reflect these nuances. National strategies in particular need to be able to reflect this diversity.

- *Getting a job* was something that young people who lived outside a capital city identified as very important and may be a more pressing issue for them due to the generally higher rates of unemployment in non-metropolitan areas.
- Young people living outside the capital cities were also more concerned about *alcohol and other drugs* than their metropolitan contemporaries. This could reflect the generally higher levels of alcohol misuse, at the aggregate level, in rural and regional communities and signals the importance of strategies targeting this issue particularly in those communities.
- For 20-24 year olds living in a capital city, the issues of both *depression* and *coping with stress*, were more significant than for their non-metropolitan contemporaries. Seventy-five percent of mental health problems begin in the period 15 to 25 years (Hickie et al 2004), therefore the recent increased public focus on improving mental health services, including for young people, is welcomed. Given the particular access issues facing young people in rural and regional communities, strategies targeting their needs are also required, particularly in the areas of early intervention and prevention.
- *Sports, arts/cultural activities* and *youth groups/clubs* were popular ways of engaging in community life for a high proportion of young people, regardless of where they lived. Strategies which encourage young people in their twenties to remain involved in activities, such as *sports*, may be needed to respond to the significant drop off in participation for this age group and the positive physical, mental and social benefits of participation. Strategies which enable enhanced participation in *arts/cultural activities* for young people living outside capital cities may also be needed given their lower rates of involvement.

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