



**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**

**Young people's
experiences of
homelessness**

Findings
from the
Youth Survey
2017



CEO foreword

This is such an important report as it gives us not only an insight into the scale of youth homelessness in Australia but, perhaps most importantly, a better understanding of who these young people are and how they are impacted by homelessness.

It allows us to understand how their experiences differ from those young people who haven't experienced homelessness, giving us some clues as to what supports are most needed.

The numbers of young people who have experienced homelessness will be shocking to many of you. Yet, for those working in the sector the concerns, aspirations and experiences of these young people will be very familiar.

Ultimately, it should serve as a stark reminder to us all that we must take action.

To do nothing risks creating a generation of young people who carry the mental and physical scars of homelessness into their adult lives. Who miss schooling because of having to move from one temporary, inadequate dwelling to another. Who may be experiencing mental illness and living in

family conflict situations without any sense of sanctuary and safety. Who are losing hope about their future as they see the barriers mounting without a sense of control over their own lives.

For many years, the community sector has been putting forward evidence-based solutions to end youth homelessness, but sadly we see from the recent census that numbers are still growing.

It is our moral duty to say enough is enough. Things have to change.

Please read the report and hear the stories of these young people, and the solutions we put forward to address the rising numbers.

Let's commit to end youth homelessness in Australia.



James Toomey
CEO, Mission Australia

**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of lands throughout Australia, and we pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the culture and dreams of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and continual relationship with the land and we recognise the importance of the young people who are the future leaders.

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Mission Australia is a national non-denominational Christian organisation that delivers evidence-based, client-centred community services. We work with families and children, young people and people experiencing homelessness and also provide specialist services for mental health, disability and alcohol and drug issues. In the 2016-17 financial year we supported over 140,000 people through 470 programs and services.



Executive summary

According to the 2016 Census, over 43,500 children and young people in Australia are homeless, although we know from our service experience that the reality is far worse, as many others are 'hidden homeless' and not counted in the official statistics.

Hidden homelessness includes people doubling up (that is one family moving in with another), or couch surfing which is used to describe those living in garages, at a friend's or relative's place, or sleeping in temporary shelter, perhaps intermittently, but without guarantee of continued residency or permanency. Hidden homelessness is particularly common for families, children and young people, increasing the precariousness of their situation and the likelihood of entrenched homelessness if supports are not accessed.

Importantly, those experiencing hidden homelessness frequently don't identify themselves as homeless

(and neither may those who are providing shelter for them). As such, they remain hidden not only from homelessness statistics but also from the service system, meaning that despite their inadequate housing circumstances they do not access supports or services needed.

While homelessness can be isolating, destabilising and traumatic for anyone experiencing it, its effects on children and young people whose development is not yet complete can be particularly devastating and long lasting. Homeless young people have been found to have much poorer physical and mental health than others their age. They have a notably higher incidence of reported self-injury and attempted suicide. They also have a greater likelihood of leaving school early, along with significantly higher unemployment rates than their peers.¹

There is a growing body of evidence being gathered about the true picture of child and youth homelessness. This report draws on our primary research, Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2017*, to provide special insight into the housing experiences of young people across Australia, including details about their recent living arrangements, frequency of moving residence and experiences of homelessness over their lifetime – both with and without a parent/guardian present. Importantly, due to the breadth of information gathered about young people through the *Youth Survey* and its large sample size, the report is also able to examine similarities and differences in the values, concerns and aspirations of young people who have experienced homelessness compared with those who have not.

Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2017* findings deepen our understanding of the issues faced by young people who have experienced homelessness and how these compare to the issues faced by young people who haven't experienced

homelessness. This research, which confirms other recent Australian studies, also serves to further the development of evidence based policy and best practice in service delivery.

A comprehensive response to youth homelessness requires early identification, prevention and intervention services, as well as suitable housing and wrap-around supports if and when homelessness does occur. With funding, commitment and shared effort Australia can end youth homelessness by 2030.

Mission Australia is a proud member of the Everybody's Home campaign which calls for a commitment to end homelessness by 2030 and we believe ending youth homelessness is an important part of this goal. We know what works, but it needs funding, leadership, continuous commitment and shared effort which will best be achieved through a national homelessness strategy.

Key findings

In total, 24,055 young people participated in the *Youth Survey 2017*, Mission Australia's 16th annual survey of young Australians aged 15-19 years. Of these, 21,812 responded to the survey's questions on experiences of homelessness, with **nearly 1 in 6 young people (15.6%) reporting having experienced a type of homelessness**, either time with no fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional accommodation or time spent couch surfing. Among those who reported couch surfing, these experiences were often not isolated, with only one in five (19.8%) indicating this had happened on just one occasion and with some young people having typically stayed away for periods longer than 6 months. Importantly, almost one in five of those who had couch surfed (19.5%) reported that they had first done so when they were less than 12 years old.

Other key findings of the survey included:

Young people who had experienced homelessness were notably more likely than young people who had never experienced homelessness to:

- Have moved in the past three years, with more than one fifth (21.7%) of young people who had experienced homelessness having moved 3 or more times in the past three years, compared with only one in twenty young people (5.1%) who had never experienced homelessness.
- Feel there would be barriers to the achievement of their study/work goals after leaving school (70.3% compared with 47.3%).
- Report not being in paid employment but looking for work (39.9% compared with 33.0%).
- Highly value *getting a job* (49.0% compared with 37.4%).
- Be highly concerned about *family conflict* (44.4% *extremely* or *very concerned* compared with 14.7%) and *depression* (43.8% *extremely* or *very concerned* compared with 18.9%).
- Report their family's ability to get along was only *fair* (22.2% compared with 9.6%) or *poor* (23.7% compared with 3.9%).
- Indicate low levels of happiness with their life as a whole (24.3% compared with 6.2% giving a rating between 0-30 out of 100).
- Meet the criteria for having a probable serious mental illness (47.9% compared with 18.8%).²
- Feel they had *no control* over their life (10.3% compared with 1.8%).
- Report the statement 'I have high self-esteem' was *not very true of me* (19.6% compared with 6.8%).
- Feel *negative/very negative* about the future (19.4% compared with 7.9%).

Despite the stark differences identified above, there were also a number of similarities between the two cohorts including:

- Over 9 in 10 of those who had or hadn't experienced homelessness were currently undertaking some type of study (94.6% compared with 97.6% respectively). Similarly, the vast majority of both cohorts intended to complete Year 12 (93.8% compared with 97.7% respectively).
- The most frequently cited plan after leaving school was to go to university, although this was at lower levels amongst those who had experienced homelessness (50.4% compared with 69.6%).
- Both groups rated *friendships* and *family relationships* as being among their top three most valued items.
- The top two concerns for both cohorts were *coping with stress* and *school or study problems*.
- The top three sources of help with important issues in their lives were consistently *friend/s*, *parent/s*, and a *relative/family friend*.
- Both identified *mental health*, *alcohol and drugs* and *equity and discrimination* as the top three issues facing Australia.
- The top three activities for both cohorts were *sports (as a participant)*, *sports (as a spectator)* and *volunteer work*, with young people indicating strong levels of participation across a range of activities regardless of whether or not they had experienced homelessness.

This report further draws comparisons between the responses of young people who have experienced youth homelessness and those who have experienced homelessness with their family. While results across both groups generally followed a similar pattern to the findings outlined above for all young people experiencing homelessness, those who had experienced youth homelessness were the most likely to express low levels of confidence in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school, to indicate high levels of concern about *family conflict*, *depression* and *suicide*, to meet the criteria for having a probable serious mental illness

and to express negative feelings about the future.

Young people experiencing either youth or family homelessness gave less positive ratings of their family's ability to get along than those who had never experienced homelessness, however, those experiencing youth homelessness were the most likely to indicate only *fair* or *poor* family relationships, to express high levels of concern about *family conflict* and to cite *family responsibilities* and *lack of family support* as barriers to them achieving their study/work goals. They were also the least likely to say they had lived with their parent/s over the past three months and to turn to *parent/s* for help with important issues in their lives.

The *Youth Survey 2017* findings have important implications for how we understand and act to address the issues of youth and family homelessness. They point to the existence of a critical group of young people who are either couch surfing and/or have experienced other types of homelessness during their lifetime. This group is far more likely to perceive barriers to the achievement of their study/work goals, to indicate poor family relationships and family conflict, to be concerned about depression, to be showing indicators of probable serious mental illness and feeling negatively towards the future. Critically, some of these young people are lacking the important support families can offer as they navigate adolescence, a period of significant change and challenge and move towards independence.

As discussed below, the findings highlight the importance of an early identification mechanism for young people at risk of homelessness and timely interventions providing the support necessary to prevent these young people continuing down a pathway to entrenched homelessness. Given this research reveals that young people who have an experience of homelessness have poorer outcomes on a number of measures, such as family functioning and mental health (including self-esteem and sense of control) compared to their non-homeless counterparts, a universal assessment tool, which is sensitive to differences in such items could allow for an individual and immediate response and subsequently reduce youth homelessness.

Key policy recommendations:

Mission Australia is a proud member of the Everybody's Home campaign which calls for a commitment to end homelessness by 2030 and we believe ending youth homelessness is an important part of this goal. We know what works, but it needs funding, leadership, continuous commitment and shared effort which will best be achieved through a national homelessness strategy. Mission Australia's experience in the provision of services for young people and families, combined with our research and advocacy in this area, points to the following key recommendations.

Commonwealth, State and Territory governments should:

1 Develop a national homelessness strategy:

- To end homelessness in Australia by 2030 including ending youth homelessness as a preliminary step to this goal; and
- That addresses the drivers of homelessness for young people, including poverty, family violence, mental illness and the lack of affordable housing.

2 Invest in prevention, early intervention and outreach:

- By funding and expanding proven early identification and intervention programs, such as the Reconnect Program and Community of Schools and Services (COSS) model; and
- Providing outreach services to reach children and young people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the areas they frequent.

3 Increase the focus on educational engagement for young people at risk of homelessness:

- By building on re-engagement and alternative education programs that work effectively with vulnerable young people such as Flexible Learning Options, Navigator and Education Support Worker Models; and
- To improve outcomes across all domains of young people's lives including their prospects of employment and stable housing in the future.

4 Prevent young people exiting state care into homelessness:

- Through improved exit planning for young people leaving out-of-home-care, increased availability of wrap-around supports, the option to extend care placements and affordable and appropriate independent accommodation options; as well as
- Adopting whole of government approaches to prevent young people becoming homeless

when they exit all forms of state care including hospitals and drug and alcohol facilities, correction facilities, detention centres and mental health institutions.

5 Prevent young people becoming homeless with their families:

- By reducing domestic and family violence (DFV) and associated homelessness including through: education on healthy relationships in schools; family early intervention programs; improved training of first to know agencies; legal and policing reform; men's behaviour change programs and broader efforts to address underlying gender equality and rigid gender stereotypes; and
- Improving the affordability of housing for households on the lowest incomes, as well as providing tenancy and tailored supports to family members as needed.

6 Rapidly rehouse young people who experience homelessness and support them to maintain that housing:

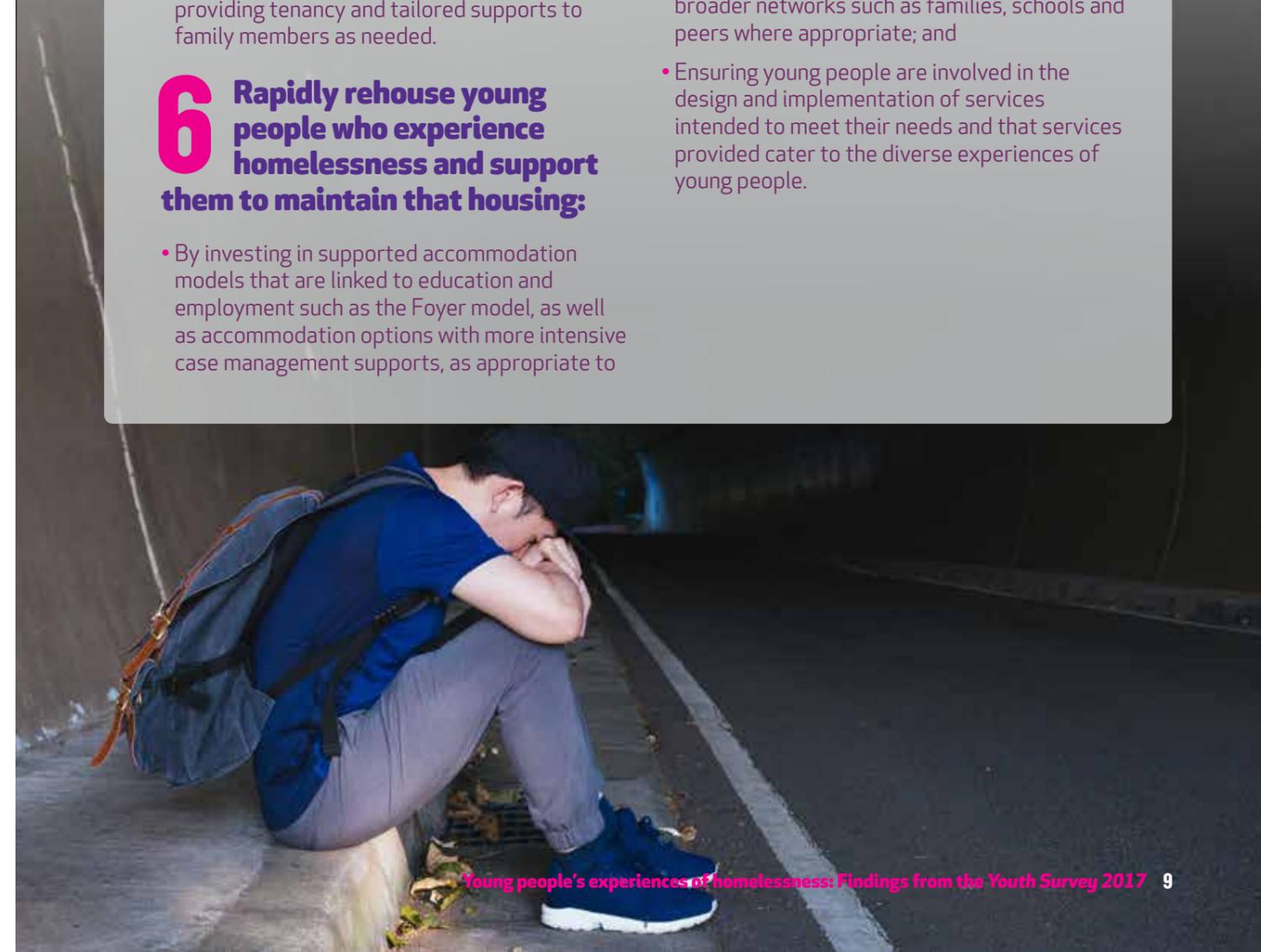
- By investing in supported accommodation models that are linked to education and employment such as the Foyer model, as well as accommodation options with more intensive case management supports, as appropriate to

the young person's needs or circumstances;

- Investing in more social and affordable housing that is appropriate and available for young people to allow timely access to a stable home.
- Increasing Youth Allowance and Commonwealth Rent Assistance payments to relieve rental stress and prevent homelessness for young people renting independently; and
- Providing long-term sustainable funding to increase housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and address overcrowding.

7 Put young people at the centre of policy and practice:

- By providing holistic wrap-around services that also have capacity to engage young people's broader networks such as families, schools and peers where appropriate; and
- Ensuring young people are involved in the design and implementation of services intended to meet their needs and that services provided cater to the diverse experiences of young people.





"I think that my generation needs to know that we will be able to afford the daily needs and live in a decent house instead of on the street."

F, 16, VIC

"Youth need more support. You could have friends that are couch surfing and you won't even know. They need to be more honest so they can be safe at night and feel supported."

F, 17, NSW

"My biggest concern has been being able to have a house to stay in that's safe."

F, 15, VIC

"Need affordable housing for young people with no family, that is not a refuge."

M, 16, WA

"Need more support and financial aid for youth who are homeless."

F, 17, SA

Introduction

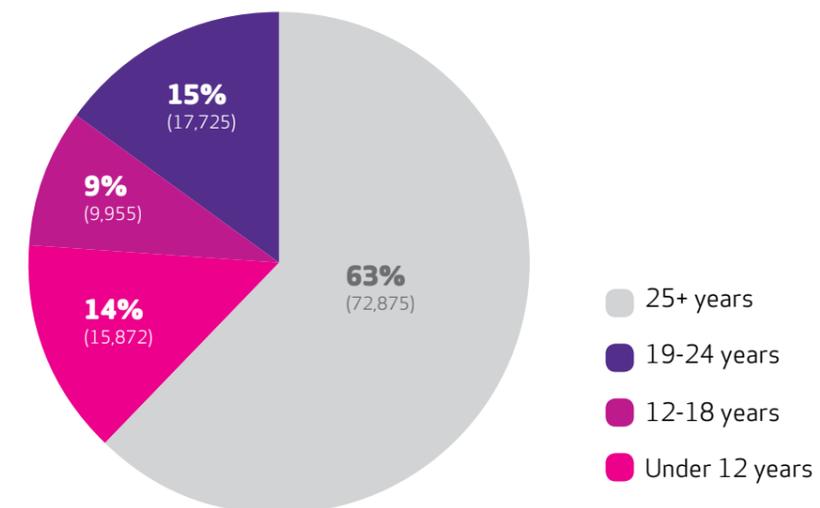
Childhood and adolescence are particularly critical periods in a person's life where foundations are laid for the future. During adolescence, young people experience and must learn to cope with a range of changes: physical, mental, emotional, financial and social. This period in a young person's life is critical in setting the stage for a happy and successful adulthood. To complete the transition, young people need 'to fulfill educational goals, become economically self-sufficient, and develop and maintain affirming social relationships'.³ All of these milestones are much more difficult to achieve, however, for young people experiencing housing instability or homelessness. This report highlights some of the main challenges and concerns facing young people who have experienced homelessness and outlines the need for coordinated, cross disciplinary policy and service responses to address the needs of these young people and ensure that they do not continue down the pathway into adult homelessness.

Prevalence of child and youth homelessness

Just over 43,500 children and young people in Australia are homeless.⁴ The 2016 Census reported that almost one quarter of Australia's homeless population were aged between 12 and 24, with a further 14% (15,872)

being children under the age of 12. Children and young people therefore account for nearly four in ten of all homeless Australians.⁵

Figure 1: Total homeless population in Australia^{6,7}



Introduction (cont)

We know young people are over-represented in the homeless population, for instance, the rate of homelessness for young people aged 19-24 years is particularly high at 95 per 10,000, compared to 50 per 10,000 for the general population.⁸ It is generally accepted, however, that these figures still underestimate the extent of youth homelessness. Young people who couch surf, for example, are often recorded as having a usual address, despite the fact they may be unable to return there and are living in conditions that otherwise meet the criteria for homelessness. Furthermore, young people are more likely than older people to cycle in and out of homelessness.⁹

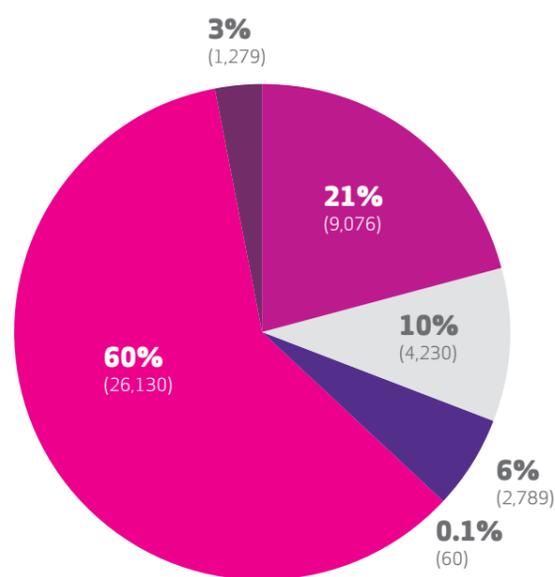
Another approach to estimating the prevalence of homelessness is to consider the number of people seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services (SHS). Almost 125,000 young people (under the age of 25) sought assistance from services of this type between 2016-17. Of these, around 43,000 were between the ages of 18 to 24 (35%), while another 47,000 were under the age of 10 (38%).¹⁰ The number of young people in both of these age groups seeking assistance from SHS has increased since 2014-15.¹¹ Still, these numbers again underestimate the extent of youth homelessness as many of those who experience 'hidden homelessness' such as couch-surfers and those in transient living arrangements do not use these services.¹²

Types of child and youth homelessness

Different forms of homelessness

The 2016 Census notes that there are many different types of homelessness. Figure 2 provides a point-in-time snapshot of child and youth homelessness in Australia as revealed by the Census. However, as mentioned above, it is important to recognise that some young people cycle in and out of homelessness or transition through different forms of homelessness over any given time period and may not be captured in this data.¹³

Figure 2: Children and young people aged 24 and under in different forms of homelessness¹⁴



- Improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out
- Supported accommodation for the homeless
- Staying temporarily with other households
- Boarding houses
- Other temporary lodgings
- 'Severely' crowded dwellings

As can be seen in Figure 2, the largest proportion of homeless children and young people identified by the Census were those living in severely crowded dwellings (60%).¹⁵ In total, the Census found that there were 26,130 children and young people living in severely crowded homes, which is known to cause health, safety and child protection risks, whilst also leading to poor educational outcomes. Around half of all people living in these severely overcrowded conditions were born in a country other than Australia (49%) and around one third were Indigenous (32%).¹⁶

This paper focuses on two key types of homelessness experienced by young people – young people who are experiencing homelessness either with or without their families.

Family homelessness

Most children under the age of 15 who access SHS do so as part of a family, usually with their mother. Roughly a third of those accessing SHS between 2016-17 were sole parents with one or more accompanying children.¹⁷ Four in ten clients seeking assistance from SHS during this period were experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV), with the vast majority of these being females and children (94%).¹⁸

As noted, homeless families are often 'doubling-up', living with family or friends, frequently in overcrowded conditions or in short term accommodation such as hotels and motels, again meaning they may be undercounted in the enumeration of the homeless population. Importantly, family homelessness often invokes parental fear of losing their children which may discourage seeking help from services.¹⁹

In this report, family homelessness has been used to describe the situation of young people who have experienced time with no fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional housing with a parent/guardian present during some or all of these experiences.

Youth homelessness

A high proportion of young people aged between 15 and 24 present to SHS unaccompanied. Over 7 in 10 young people seeking assistance from SHS presented alone, some 42,000 young people.²⁰ Of these, over one fifth were aged between 15-17 (22.8%) and most identified as female (62%).²¹

As noted, a common form of homelessness for young people is couch surfing. Couch surfing refers to people who stay away from their usual residence, living temporarily with other households because they feel unable to return home. They might be sleeping on friends' sofas, spare rooms or garages; they may be away for days, weeks or months; and this may happen in intermittent periods or more consistently.

The Youth Survey's finding that couch surfing is common amongst this age group is also reflected in other recent Australian research.²² Among young people aged 15-24 presenting alone to SHS, 30% were couch surfing or staying in housing with no tenure when they first sought assistance.²³ The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia study found that 86% of

young people who later become homeless had spent time couch surfing prior to the age of 18 (often across multiple periods) because they had nowhere else to go.²⁴

Youth homelessness is used within this report to describe the situation of young people who have either couch surfed (i.e. spent time away from home because they felt unable to return) or experienced time with no fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional housing without a parent/guardian present or with a parent/guardian present during only some of these experiences.



Introduction (cont)

Key issues within child and youth homelessness

As touched on earlier, there are some topics which are particularly pertinent in any discussion of child and youth homelessness within Australia. These are the prevalence of DFV as a driver of homelessness and the concerning over-representation of Indigenous Australians within the homeless population. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine these issues in detail, a brief summary of these issues is provided below.

Domestic and family violence

DFV is a particularly important consideration in any discussion of child and youth homelessness. DFV and insecure housing are the two most common main reasons young people aged 15-24 present alone to SHS for assistance.²⁵

Across Australia, many children and young people are

affected by DFV. One in 12 people have experienced physical abuse by a family member as a child; one in every 28 people have also experienced sexual abuse by a family member as a child.²⁶ Additionally, children's witnessing or exposure to domestic violence has been increasingly recognised as a form of child abuse. Although it is difficult to accurately assess the scope of the problem, research has shown that a substantial amount of domestic violence is witnessed by children.²⁷

In the *Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia* study, more than half (56%) of the homeless youth surveyed had to leave home on at least one occasion because of violence between parents or guardians. Of those who ran away from home for that reason, the median age of their first experience leaving home was only 10. Additionally, over a third (39%) of the homeless young people reported police coming to their home because of violence between parents on one or more occasions, with 14% experiencing the police coming to their home more than 10 times.²⁸

A more complicated picture of youth homelessness

is presented by the longitudinal *Journeys Home* study. The study found that family background and events occurring to respondents **during their childhood** (including family violence) did not appear to be significantly associated with 'more persistent homelessness' during the study's survey period (except experiences of custody).²⁹ But the study also found that respondents' current circumstances matter a lot, as the average prevalence of homelessness is much higher for those recently experiencing family breakdown. Factors such as **recently** experiencing family violence make homelessness more likely at that point in time.³⁰

Importantly, this highlights that a history of family violence need not condemn a child or young person to homelessness. When families can access a variety of supports, including those offered by community agencies, and can work together to stop the violence at home and keep everyone safe, this may prevent the child or young person leaving home. Governments are also increasingly recognising the need for men's behaviour change programs, where perpetrators of DFV are taught to change their behaviour while other family members are supported during the process, with the overarching aim of keeping the family together if safe to do so. These programs need to be monitored

and evaluated to understand their effectiveness over time.

Indigenous youth homelessness

Within any discussion of child and youth homelessness in Australia, attention needs to be paid to the high incidence of youth homelessness within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.³¹ Homelessness in the general Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is a much larger problem than in the non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and incorporates both spiritual and physical dimensions.³²

Of those accessing SHS in 2016-17, 25% identified as being of either Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin, equating to 64,644 clients.³³

The prevalence of homelessness among the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is higher due to socioeconomic disadvantage, a severe shortage of appropriate housing in remote locations and a history of dispossession. Overcrowding is a particular issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and is often overlooked both statistically and in terms of support services. Of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were classified

Introduction (cont)

as homeless in the 2016 Census, 70% were living in 'severely' crowded dwellings compared to 42% of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness.³⁴ Cultural obligations, such as kin responsibilities, mobility for funerals, and cultural events can all influence overcrowding. Tackling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's homelessness depends on adequate and culturally-appropriate housing, including in rural towns and remote communities; as well as improving the physical living conditions of children and young people growing up in overcrowded housing, while ensuring that they can receive the benefit of strong support from family and extended family.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are also over-represented in out-of-home care and juvenile justice systems, which increases their risk of homelessness upon exit. To address these issues, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities need to be genuine partners in solving the complex problems they experience, including those around homelessness poverty, disadvantage and the lack of appropriate housing.³⁵

Investment should be directed as a priority to address overcrowding, particularly in remote communities. Case management is required to address underlying and intersecting issues including family disconnection, contact with the justice system, exits from out-of-home care, mental health issues and DFV which are all heightened risks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who face multiple disadvantages.

Impacts of child and youth homelessness

Homelessness can be an isolating, destabilising and often traumatic experience. But for children and young people, whose development is not yet complete, homelessness can be particularly devastating and its effects long-lasting.

A supportive home environment is a particularly important aspect of a child's or young person's life. This environment supports their development, as:

- Safe housing is essential for good health. Unsafe

conditions including severe overcrowding can lead to infectious illness (such as respiratory illnesses) which can reduce time and/or performance at school and have long term consequences on health outcomes.³⁶

- Stable housing tenure has been found to impact positively on the mental health of parents and on family stability.³⁷
- Continuity is important to support educational and social development, including through a consistent school and a stable social network. Evidence shows that higher rates of residential mobility (except where a new school is chosen as a positive) are associated with lower educational outcomes.³⁸
- Stable housing is also a platform for other supports around the family, such as social services and having someone you can turn to in a crisis. Evidence shows that the longer a person lives in a neighbourhood or attends a school, the more support networks they have.³⁹

Mission Australia was a partner in the study *The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia*, which looked at the experiences of young people who were homeless and at risk of homelessness.⁴⁰ When interviewed, the homeless young people were receiving support from a SHS or a Department of Social Services (DSS) funded Reconnect service. This study found that young people who are homeless have:

- Higher levels of psychological distress. 61% of the homeless young women participating in the study (and 51% of the men) experienced very high or high distress, compared with 19% of female (and 12% of male) young Australians in the general population.
- Much higher incidence of reported non-suicidal self-injury and attempted suicide. One in five (20%) homeless young women (and 12% of young men) had attempted suicide in the previous six months. More than one in four (28%) young homeless women (and 17% of young men) had engaged in non-suicidal self-injury behaviours. Just over half (55%) of homeless youth who had attempted suicide in the past six months had not received any counselling or professional support for this.
- Significantly higher unemployment rates. Nearly one-quarter (22%) of homeless young people have never

had a paid job in their lifetime, compared with only 6% of young jobseekers.

- Greater likelihood of leaving school early. Only one third (31%) of homeless young people had completed Year 12, compared with 57% of young job seekers.
- Poorer health outcomes. Around a third of homeless respondents reported having a long-standing physical health condition.
- Higher prevalence of mental health conditions. Over half (53%) of homeless young people reported that they had been diagnosed with at least one mental health condition in their lifetime, compared to 26% of young people in the general population (who met the criteria for diagnosis of a lifetime prevalence of a mental health disorder and experiencing symptoms in the previous year).

The study's authors concluded:

Homelessness is one of the most severe forms of disadvantage and social exclusion that any person can experience. It is also a frightening and traumatic experience, particularly for children and young people just beginning to make their own way in life. It makes everyday activities like attending secondary school, engaging in further training, or getting a job, difficult in the extreme. Homeless young people often experience mental and physical health problems and experience much higher rates of disconnection from family and friends. The personal and community costs of homelessness are very high.

The absence of safe and secure accommodation, compounded in many cases by poor health, difficult financial circumstances and social isolation, has direct adverse effects on young people's health and wellbeing. The choices many young homeless people make, in order to cope or survive the homeless experience, put them at further risk of harm.

In addition to the personal costs to young people caused by homelessness, youth homelessness imposes an economic burden on society. The final report of *The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia* provided an analysis of the economic costs of homelessness, both in terms of the costs of providing accommodation and support services, as well as health and justice costs. In terms of these costs, the report notes that there are a significant costs associated with young people experiencing homelessness, with additional costs to the Australian economy of \$355 million on health

services and \$391 million on justice per year across all young people aged 15-24 accessing SHS. This does not include the costs associated with lost education and low engagement with employment.⁴¹



Method

This report provides unique insight into the experiences of young people through drawing upon Mission Australia's 16th annual national survey of young people aged 15 to 19 years, *Mission Australia's Youth Survey 2017*. Importantly it furthers our understanding of the causes, patterns, system responses, and policy context of youth and family homelessness which has been deepened by the experiences of Mission Australia's clients and service workers.

About the Youth Survey 2017

In total, 24,055 young people responded to the *Youth Survey 2017*. The annual survey collects socio-demographic information and asks young people about their current circumstances, values, concerns and aspirations. Each year a special focus topic is also included. In 2017, we asked respondents a range of questions about housing; including details about their living arrangements over the past three months, frequency of moving residence and experiences of homelessness over their lifetime. For the first time, we asked young people whether or not they had ever experienced a time when they had no fixed address or lived in a refuge or transitional housing, and if so, whether or not a parent or guardian was present during these experiences. We also asked young people whether they had ever spent time away from home because they felt unable to return (a proxy indicator for couch surfing) and, if so, the age at which this first occurred and the frequency and duration of such experiences.

Sample breakdown

From the questions we asked young people about their experiences of homelessness, we have grouped respondents into categories, enabling us to examine their responses to the other survey questions and to see where concerns, values and life experiences may differ or be similar amongst those who have **never** experienced any type of homelessness compared to those who have. To provide greater insight into the differences and similarities among young people who have been homeless, we have further broken the data down to examine the responses of those who have experienced youth homelessness i.e. homelessness

without a parent/guardian (either time with no fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional housing, or couch surfing); and those who have experienced family homelessness i.e. homelessness with a parent/guardian (time with no fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional housing with a parent/guardian present during at least one experience).

Among respondents to the *Youth Survey 2017*, a total of 3,397 **individual** young people indicated having an experience of some type of homelessness. 18,415 young people indicated having no experience of homelessness (the remaining respondents chose not to answer these questions). In total, this means that nearly 1 in 6 young people (15.6%) reported having an experience of homelessness (see Appendix for state/territory breakdowns). When further broken down to examine whether or not a parent/guardian present was present during these experiences of homelessness, 1,195 respondents were able to be categorised as having experienced family homelessness (as per the definition and qualifying criteria above), while 2,659 had experienced youth homelessness (as per the definition and qualifying criteria above).

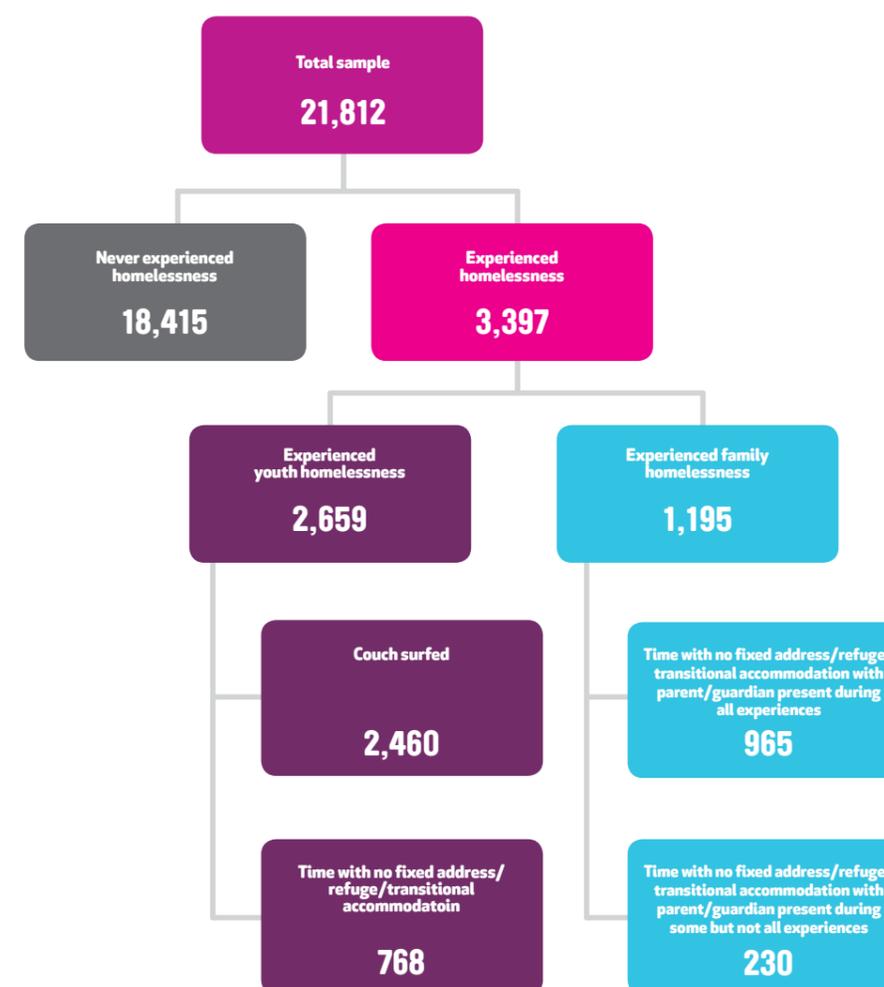
In order to understand the socio-economic status (SES) of the 3,397 young people who had experienced homelessness, the postcode information gathered about each respondent was mapped against one of the ABS' Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) to determine the relative SES of their local area. Specifically, the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD) was selected for this analysis which ranks areas in terms of relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. Importantly, this revealed that of those who had experienced homelessness there was a spread of respondents across all SES groups, with 31.7% living

in low SES areas (reporting a postcode in the bottom 40% for IRSAD), 40.2% living in moderate SES areas (reporting a postcode in the next 40% for IRSAD) and 28.1% living in high SES areas (reporting a postcode in the top 20% for IRSAD). Further analysis of this cohort's characteristics revealed a wide spread across geographic regions, as well as across participating schools, youth organisations and services. Interestingly, when the responses of young people who had experienced homelessness were analysed on the basis of SES groupings, similar trends were apparent across all groups i.e. regardless of SES, young people who had experienced homelessness reported very similar concerns, values, aspirations and behaviours.

Figure 3 below provides a breakdown of the sample and categories used throughout this report. It is important to note that young people have complex

lives and may have had a range of experiences across the homelessness spectrum. As a result, some young people responding to the Youth Survey (n=477) met the criteria for inclusion in both the youth homelessness and family homelessness categories, meaning that these groupings are not independent. For instance, respondents qualified for inclusion in both the youth homelessness and family homelessness categories if they had a parent/guardian present during **some but not all** of their homelessness experiences (n=230). Similarly, if a young person who had experienced time with no fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional housing with a parent/guardian present **all** of the time had also couch surfed (n=247), they would again qualify for inclusion in both youth homelessness and family homelessness categories.

Figure 3: Sample breakdown⁴²



Method (cont)

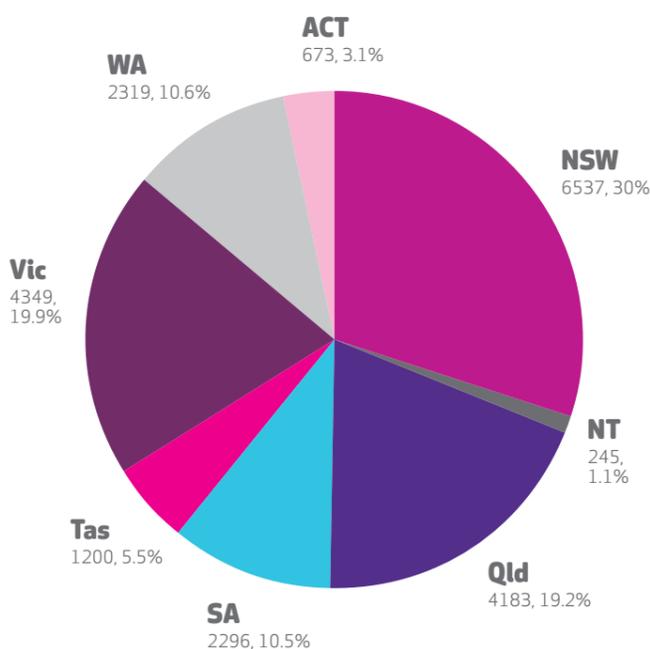
The report is unique in examining the values, concerns and aspirations of young people who have experienced both youth and family homelessness, with the findings highlighting important implications for both policy and practice.

Demographic characteristics of the sample

State/Territory distribution

The 21,812 respondents making up the sample for this report came from across Australia. Figure 4 indicates the number and percentage from each state/territory. There were 10 respondents who did not indicate which state/territory they lived in.

Figure 4: Distribution of respondents by state/territory



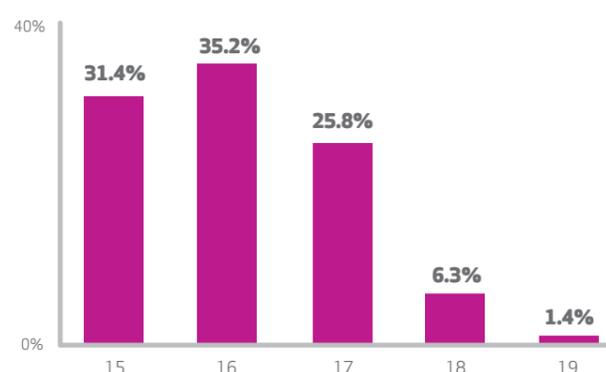
Gender breakdown

Over half of all respondents were female (57.7%) and four in ten were male (39.6%). The remaining 2.7% indicated another gender or chose not to answer this question.

Age breakdown

The age distribution of respondents is shown in Figure 5 below. As can be seen, just under one third of respondents were 15 years old, slightly over one third were 16, around one quarter were 17, and just under one in ten were 18 years or older.

Figure 5: Age distribution of respondents



Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

A total of 1,111 respondents identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (5.1%). Of this total, 972 (4.5%) identified as Aboriginal and 76 (0.4%) identified as Torres Strait Islander (the remaining 0.3% identified as both).⁴³

Language background other than English

3,230 respondents (14.9%) indicated that they were born overseas and 3,873 (17.9%) indicated speaking a language other than English at home.

Youth Survey 2017 findings

Young people, like many others experiencing homelessness in Australia, share similar experiences of isolation, fear, and trauma. However, there are different patterns and causes of child and youth homelessness, in part due to its frequently hidden nature (as outlined above); and, therefore there need to be different ways of responding. Mission Australia presents the research findings gathered from young people themselves through our *Youth Survey 2017*, to add to the growing evidence base surrounding youth and family homelessness.



Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Experiences of homelessness among Youth Survey 2017 respondents

As discussed above, there are different types of homelessness that young people may experience, with some cycling in and out of homelessness or transitioning through different forms of homelessness over time. As confirmed by both our service experience and previous research, homelessness can have devastating and long lasting impacts on young people, their education and employment, physical and mental health and overall prospects for the future. Having a stable home with support from family and a broader social network is important for young people's development and security. However, we know that sadly this is not the case for many young Australians.

The findings below detail the housing and homelessness experiences of respondents to the Youth Survey 2017. They reveal that a concerning proportion of young people have experienced either time without a fixed address, living in a refuge or transitional accommodation (6.9%) and/or time spent couch surfing (11.4%). Moreover, they suggest that in many cases this experience of homelessness is not an isolated one-off incident, with the majority of couch surfers reporting they have spent time away from home

more than once, and a small but important minority (7.0%) suggesting they typically stay away for longer than 6 months, putting them on the path to entrenched homelessness if intervention does not occur.

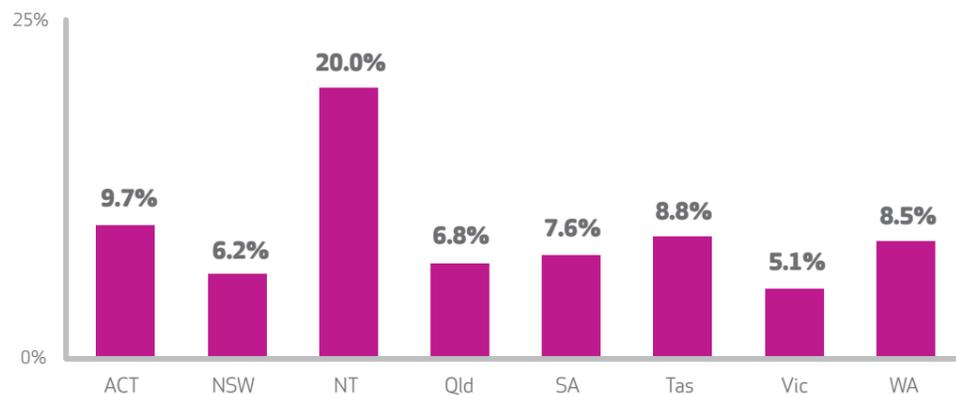
Time without a fixed address or lived in a refuge or transitional accommodation

The Youth Survey 2017 asked young people if they had ever experienced a time when they had no fixed address or lived in a refuge or transitional accommodation. In total, 6.9% of respondents indicated having experienced this at least once (n=1,506).

Very similar percentages of male and female respondents indicated having experienced such a time. Across the age groups, reports of this type of homelessness were at similar levels for 15 - 17 year olds (ranging from 6.2% to 6.9%), while they increased slightly among 18 year olds (8.8%) and more markedly among 19 year olds (20.1%).

As can be seen in Figure 6 below, proportions of young people reporting such experiences across the various states and territories ranged from 5.1% in VIC to 20.0% in the NT. This notably higher level of reported homelessness in the NT reflects the Census findings of a disproportionately high rate of homelessness within this state.⁴⁴

Figure 6: Percentage of respondents reporting having experienced a time with no fixed address or living in a refuge or transitional housing, by state/territory



Of the 1,506 young people who reported having experienced a time when they had no fixed address or lived in a refuge or transitional accommodation:

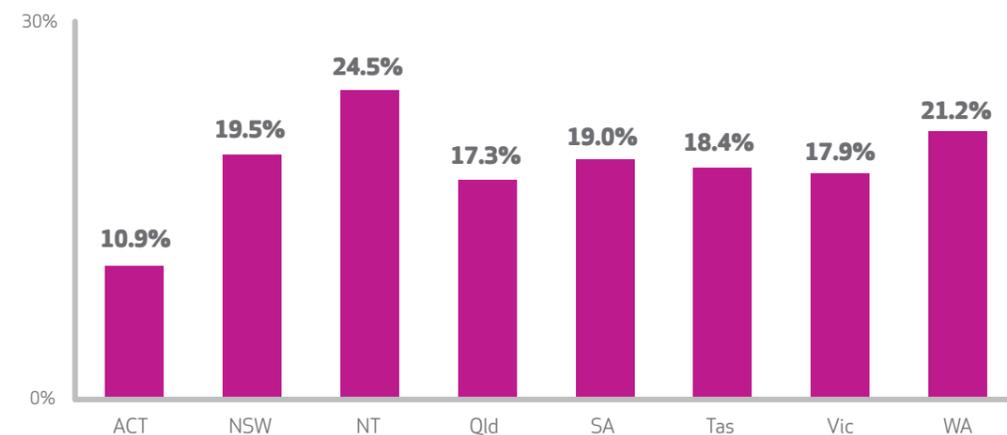
- Two thirds (65.6%) indicated that a parent/guardian had been present during **all** of these experiences;
- Around one in six (15.6%) indicated that a parent/guardian had been present during **some but not all** of these experiences; and
- Just under one in five (18.8%) indicated that a parent/guardian had **not** been present during any of these experiences.

A slightly higher proportion of females than males reported having had a parent/guardian present during **all** of their experiences of homelessness (71.6% compared with 63.0%). Greater proportions of males than females indicated having had a parent/guardian present during **some but not all** of these experiences (18.0% compared with 13.7%) or during **none** of these experiences (18.9% compared with 14.7%).

Unsurprisingly, the likelihood of having a parent/guardian present during experiences of homelessness decreased with age. While only around 15% of 15 and 16 year olds indicated having **not** had a parent/guardian present during any of their experiences of homeless (15.6% and 14.8% respectively), over half of 19 year olds indicated having **not** had a parent/guardian present (54.2%).

Across all states and territories, over six in ten young people who had experienced homelessness had a parent/guardian present during **all** of these experiences. Those in the NT, however, were the most likely to indicate having **not** had a parent/guardian present during any of these experiences (24.5%).

Figure 7: Parent/guardian not present during any experience of homelessness, by state/territory



Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Couch surfing

Young people were also asked if they had ever spent time away from home because they felt that they couldn't go back (used as a proxy for couch surfing). Over one in ten young people who responded to the Youth Survey 2017 (11.4%) reported a couch surfing experience.⁴⁵

A slightly higher percentage of female respondents than male respondents reported having couch surfed

(12.4% compared with 9.0%). Unsurprisingly, as with other experiences of homelessness, the likelihood of having couch surfed increased with age, ranging from 10.0% of 15 year olds to 30.2% of 19 year olds.

Across the states, the percentage of young people reporting having couch surfed ranged from one in ten in VIC (9.7%) to almost one in five in the NT (18.6%).

Figure 8: Couch surfing, by state/territory

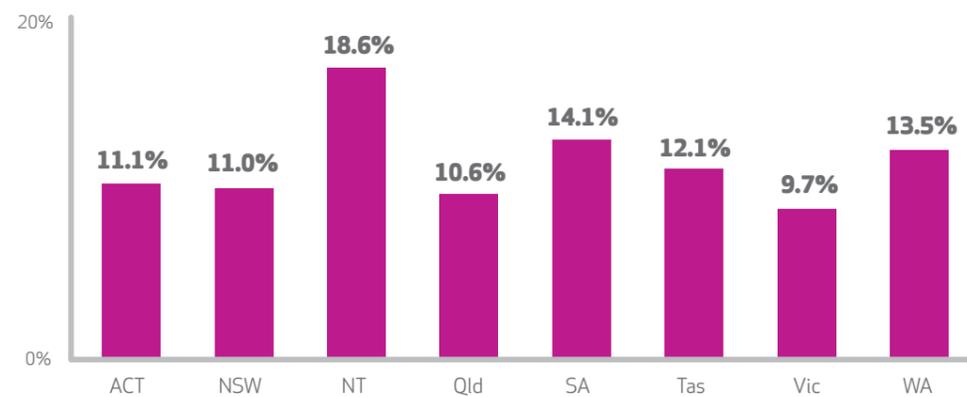
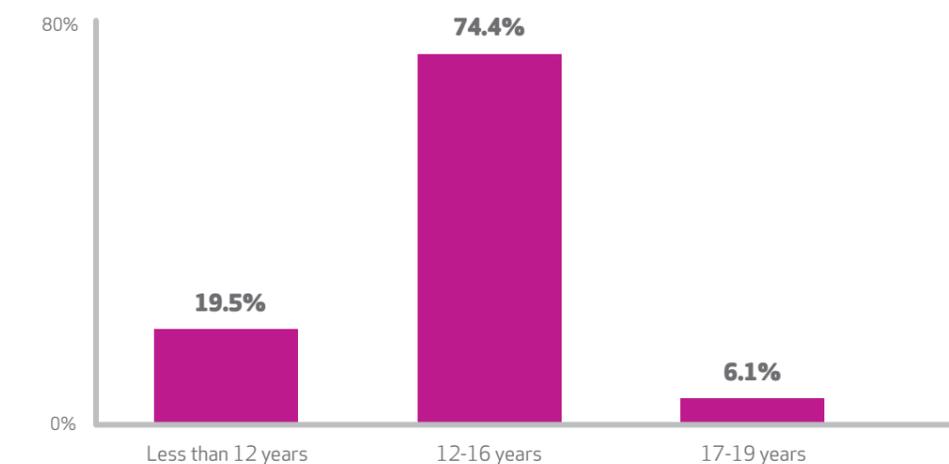


Figure 9 below indicates the age at which these respondents first couch surfed. For the majority of these young people, the first occasion of couch surfing occurred when they were aged between 12 and 16

years (74.4%). Almost one in five of those who had couch surfed (19.5%), however, reported that they had first done so when they were less than 12 years old.

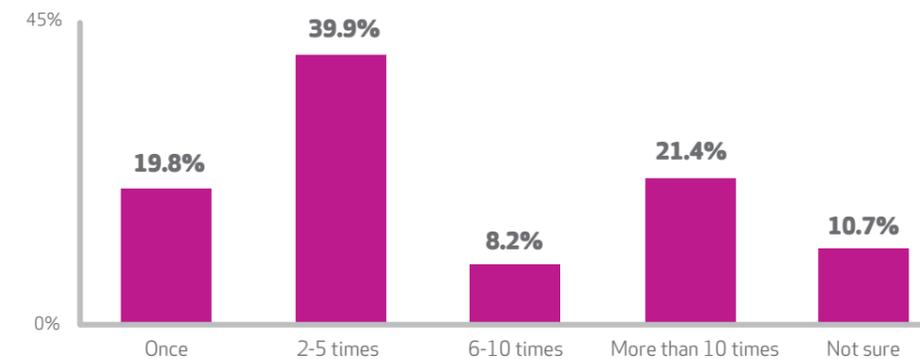
Figure 9: Age on first occasion spent time away from home



Young people who couch surfed were asked how many times that had ever done this. Importantly, the majority had done so on more than one occasion, with over one

in five couch surfers (21.4%) indicating they had done this on more than 10 occasions (see Figure 10 below).

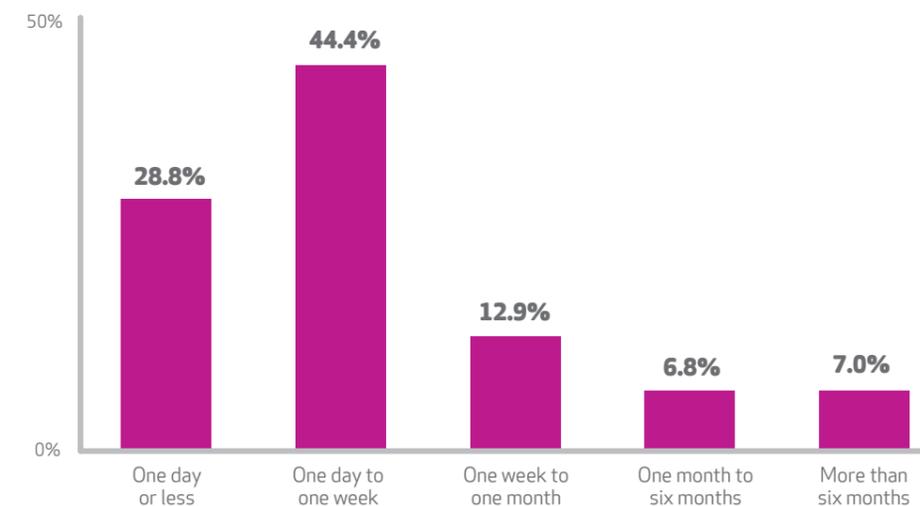
Figure 10: Young people who spent time away from home by the number of times ever spent away from home⁴⁶



Those who had couch surfed were also asked how long they typically spent away from home on each occasion. While for almost three in ten of these young people

(28.8%) this experience lasted for one day or less, 7.0% of those who couch surfed typically stayed away for longer than six months, as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Young people who spent time away from home by typical length of time spent away from home on each occasion away from home⁴⁷



These young people spending frequent and lengthy periods of time away from home couch surfing may be at an increased risk of normalising their experiences away from home and falling into more entrenched homelessness.

The remainder of this report draws on the homelessness responses presented above to examine similarities and differences in the values, concerns and aspirations of young people who have experienced both

youth and family homelessness. Results are presented from here on:

- Young people who have never experienced homelessness;
- Young people who reported an experience of homelessness;
 - Young people experiencing youth homelessness; and
 - Young people experiencing family homelessness.

Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Living arrangements over last three months

In 2017, *Youth Survey* respondents were asked whether they had spent most of their time over the past three months living with their parent/s or somewhere else. Young people who had experienced homelessness were almost four times more likely than those who had

never experienced homelessness to indicate that they lived somewhere other than with their parent/s in the past three months (18.7% compared with 4.8%). Over one fifth (22.4%) of young people who had experienced youth homelessness reported having lived somewhere other than with their parent/s over this time period, compared with 13.4% of young people who had experienced family homelessness.

Table 1: Living with parents over the last three months by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Yes, with parent/s	95.2	81.3	77.6	86.6
No, somewhere else	4.8	18.7	22.4	13.4

Among those reporting having lived somewhere other than with their parent/s over the last three months, young people who had never experienced homelessness most commonly reported having lived with *non-related person/s* (51.5%), followed by *relatives/siblings* (24.0%) and *friends* (17.7%). Comparatively, young people who had experienced homelessness and had not lived with parent/s over the last three months were most likely to have lived with *relatives/siblings* (29.4%), followed by *non-related persons* (27.3%) and *friends* (20.2%).

Again, among those reporting having lived somewhere other than with their parent/s over this recent

period, young people who had experienced youth homelessness were notably more likely than those who had experienced family homelessness to indicate having lived with *friends* (21.4% compared with 10.8%) or having lived *alone* (17.8% compared with 12.1%). Conversely, those who had experienced family homelessness were more likely than those who had experienced youth homelessness to have lived with *non-related person/s* (36.3% compared with 25.9%), *foster parents* (8.3% compared with 5.7%) or *relatives/siblings* (32.5% compared with 29.3%).

Table 2: Adult/s lived with over the last three months by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Relatives/siblings	24.0	29.4	29.3	32.5
Foster parents	3.2	6.1	5.7	8.3
Non-related person/s	51.5	27.3	25.9	36.3
Friends	17.7	20.2	21.4	10.8
I live alone	3.6	17.0	17.8	12.1

Young people were also asked to choose from a list of options which residential setting best describes where they stayed most of the time over the past three months. As seen in Table 3, the majority of young people across all categories reported having lived in a private owned or rented house/flat over the last three months. Those who had never experienced homelessness were the most likely to indicate having done so (91.8% compared to 80.7% of those who had experienced some type of homelessness).

Those who reported an experience of homelessness were more likely than those who had not experienced

homelessness to indicate that they had lived in a public/social housing house/flat (6.2% compared with 2.2%), in out-of-home-care (not foster care) (2.0% compared with 0.2%) or somewhere else (7.6% compared with 1.8%). Young people who had experienced family homelessness were the most likely to report living in a public/social housing house/flat (8.0%). Comparatively, those who had experienced youth homelessness were the most likely to have lived in out-of-home-care (not foster care) (2.4%) or somewhere else (8.9%).

Table 3: Residential setting lived in over last three months by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Private owned or rented house/flat	91.8	80.7	78.6	80.1
Public/Social Housing house/flat	2.2	6.2	6.3	8.0
Boarding house	3.9	3.6	3.8	4.0
Out-of-home-care (not foster care)	0.2	2.0	2.4	1.6
Somewhere else	1.8	7.6	8.9	6.3

Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Housing stability generally arises from parents or carers who provide children and young people with a place to live. Moving house can have consequences that are considerably more far-reaching than the move itself; it can change schooling and supportive networks and community connections, such as friendship, sport clubs and music groups. Children who move house and/or school frequently have been found to have poorer educational outcomes.⁴⁸ Similarly, high housing mobility has been connected to leaving school early.⁴⁹ Frequent moving may weaken familial bonds, which in turn may be harmful to young people.⁵⁰ This is particularly important when housing instability is accompanied by family or household instability and when it involves moving schools.

In order to gauge levels of housing stability, young people were asked how many times they had moved in the past three years. As seen in Table 4, young people

who had experienced homelessness were far more likely than young people who had never experienced homelessness to report having moved in the last three years (55.9% compared with 29.6%). In particular, young people who had experienced homelessness were almost three times as likely as those who had never experienced homelessness to have moved three times in the past three years (8.7% compared with 3.1%), around four times as likely to have moved four times in the past three years (4.5% compared with 1.1%) and over eight times as likely to have moved five or more times (8.5% compared with 0.9%). Overall, more than one fifth (21.7%) of young people who had experienced homelessness had moved 3 or more times in the past three years, compared to only one in twenty young people (5.1%) who had not experienced homelessness. Young people who had experienced youth homelessness and family homelessness reported similar levels of moving.

Table 4: Number of times moved in the last three years by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
0	70.4	44.1	43.7	39.2
1	17.3	20.5	19.7	21.1
2	7.2	13.6	13.4	15.4
3	3.1	8.7	8.9	9.4
4	1.1	4.5	4.7	6.4
5 or more	0.9	8.5	9.5	8.6

The findings presented here suggest young people who have experienced homelessness are much more likely to move house frequently. Previous research suggests that such moves may often be associated with family breakdown or conflict.⁵¹ This could include, for example, a mother and her children moving to a new dwelling after a divorce, or as a result of DFV. In such situations, not only would these young people be trying to cope with the stress of the family conflict, they would also be dealing with the stress of changing location, possibly a

new school and separation from friends, making them especially vulnerable to homelessness. It is important that young people are aware of the supports available to them, particularly if they are unable to rely on family to provide this, so that they have somewhere to turn for assistance in times of upheaval. Schools also have a role to play in assisting young people to deal with the stress of relocating and adjusting to a new environment.

Education and employment

There are complex links between housing and education and neither operates separately from the other, with each being affected by other cross-cutting areas such as health, employment, the economy and socio-economic status. As noted above, unstable housing results in negative outcomes for children and young people in terms of social networks and educational outcomes, for instance, homeless young people have been found to have a greater likelihood of leaving school early.⁵² A survey conducted by Yfoundations among clients of youth specific SHS in NSW found that respondents aged 20-24 years who were experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness were far more likely to have left school early, with a year 12 attainment rate that was less than half that of 20-24 year olds generally.⁵³ Poor educational outcomes also impact on future employability which may lead to poorer outcomes in terms of housing into adulthood.⁵⁴

Overcrowding is particularly problematic in terms of effecting young people's ability to achieve educational outcomes; the evidence shows that overcrowding reduces the number of completed school years, which

can be linked to issues such as not having enough space to do homework, or not being able to get enough sleep, or establish a daily routine.⁵⁵ Also, children living in overcrowded conditions are more likely to be bullied at school, again having long term negative impacts on children and young people's wellbeing and mental health. Children and young people who are homeless can be very mobile, influencing their relationships with teachers and resources, potentially resulting in low grades, school behaviour problems and leaving school early.⁵⁶

Education

Encouragingly, regardless of whether or not they had experienced homelessness, the vast majority of *Youth Survey 2017* respondents reported that they were currently studying full-time, which is not surprising given the age range of the respondents (Table 5). However, those who had experienced homelessness were more likely than those who had not experienced homelessness to report studying part-time (4.0% compared with 1.6%) or to report not studying at all (5.4% compared with 2.4%). Young people who had experienced youth homelessness were the most likely to say they were not currently studying (6.0%).

Table 5: Participation in education by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Studying full-time	96.1	90.6	89.6	92.7
Studying part-time	1.6	4.0	4.4	3.3
Not studying	2.4	5.4	6.0	4.0

Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Respondents who reported they were currently studying were asked how satisfied they were with their studies (Table 6). Responses to this question were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from *very satisfied* to *very dissatisfied*. The majority of young people across all categories indicated being either *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with their studies. Those who had never experienced homelessness were the most satisfied

overall (73.4% *very satisfied/satisfied*, compared to 56.0% among those who had experienced some type of homelessness). Young people who had experienced youth homelessness were the most likely to say they were *dissatisfied/very dissatisfied* with their studies (14.0%) compared to 11.1% of those experiencing family homelessness and 5.6% of those who had never experienced homelessness.

Table 6: Satisfaction with studies by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Very satisfied/satisfied	73.4	56.0	53.6	60.1
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	21.0	31.1	32.4	28.7
Dissatisfied/very dissatisfied	5.6	13.0	14.0	11.1

In another positive finding, of those who were still at school, the vast majority of young people across all categories indicated planning to complete Year 12. Comparatively however, young people who had experienced homelessness were almost three times more likely than young people who had never experienced homelessness to say they were not

intending to complete Year 12 (6.2% compared with 2.3%). Young people who had experienced youth homelessness were the most likely to say they were not planning to complete Year 12 (7.2% compared with 5.4% of those who had experienced family homelessness).

Table 7: Planning to complete Year 12 by homelessness status

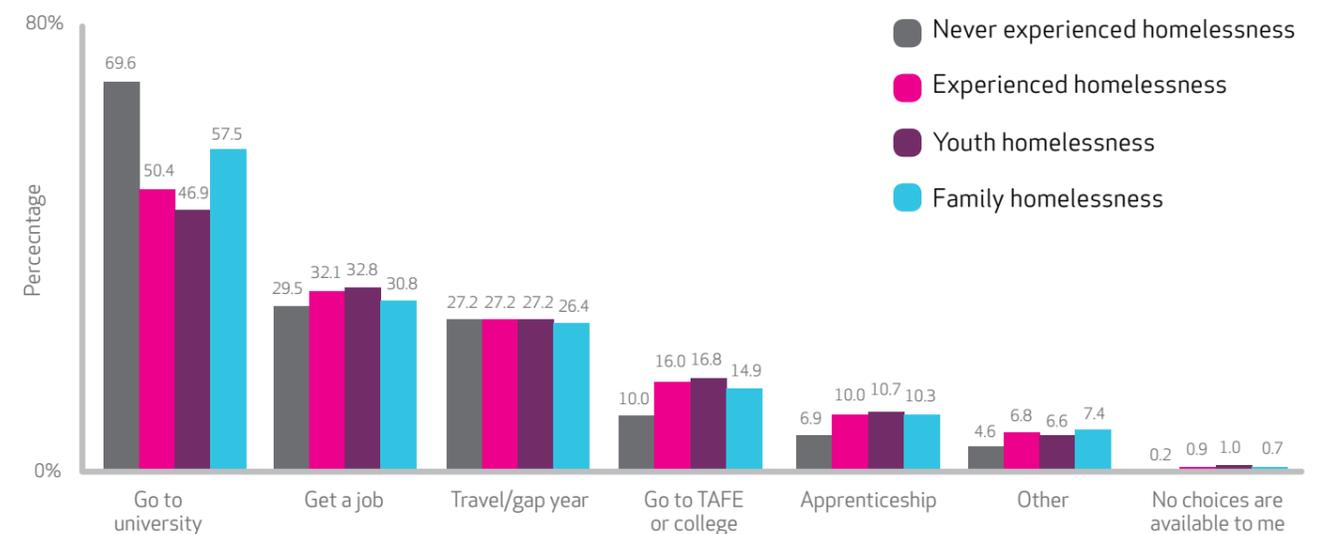
	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Yes	97.7	93.8	92.8	94.6
No	2.3	6.2	7.2	5.4



Respondents who were still at school were also asked what they were planning to do after leaving school. As seen in Figure 12, across all categories of young people, the top response was to go to university, followed by plans to get a job or travel/go on a gap year. Despite the order of choices being consistent across all young people, those who had experienced homelessness were notably less likely than those who had never experienced homeless to say they planned to go to university after leaving school (50.4% compared with 69.6%). Conversely, young people who had experienced

homelessness were slightly more likely than those who had never experienced homeless to say they were planning to get a job (32.1% compared with 29.5%), go to TAFE or college (16.0% compared with 10.0%) or undertake an apprenticeship (10.0% compared with 6.9%). Young people who had experienced youth homelessness were the least likely to indicate plans to go to university (46.9% compared with 57.5% of young people who had experienced family homelessness).

Figure 12: Plans after leaving school by homelessness status





In order for young people to have a sense of direction and feel positive about the future, it is important that they not only form goals to work towards but also have the self-belief that these goals are achievable if they apply themselves to pursuing them.

Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Employment

Youth Survey respondents were asked whether they currently had paid work. Those who answered that they had paid employment were asked to specify how many hours they worked per week, on average. Table 8 shows young people's participation in paid employment. Only a tiny minority of respondents across all categories reported currently working full-time – an unsurprising finding given the vast majority of respondents were still at school. Similarly, the proportion of young people

employed part-time was also very consistent across categories (at around four in ten). A greater proportion of young people who had experienced homelessness, however, reported not being in paid employment but looking for work compared to young people who had never experienced homelessness (39.9% compared with 33.0%). The proportion of young people looking for work was very similar (around four in ten) across both youth and family homelessness categories.

Table 8: Participation in paid employment by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Employed full-time	0.4	1.0	1.1	0.8
Employed part-time	40.5	41.5	42.1	39.0
Not in paid employment, looking for work	33.0	39.9	40.5	39.3
Not in paid employment, NOT looking for work	26.1	17.7	16.2	21.0

In order for young people to have a sense of direction and feel positive about the future, it is important that they not only form goals to work towards but also have the self-belief that these goals are achievable if they apply themselves to pursuing them. With this in mind, respondents were asked how confident they were in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school. Responses for this question were rated on a 5 point scale from *extremely confident* to *not at all confident*. Among young people who had never experienced homelessness, over four in ten indicated high levels of confidence in their ability to

achieve their goals (41.9% *extremely/very confident*). Comparatively around one third of young people who had experienced some type of homelessness indicated high levels of confidence (33.9% *extremely/very confident*). Those who had experienced youth homelessness were the most likely to express lower levels of confidence in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school (29.5% *slightly/not at all confident*, compared to 23.2% among those who had experienced family homelessness and 17.0% among those who had never experienced homelessness).

Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Table 9: Confidence in ability to achieve study/work goals by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Extremely/very confident	41.9	33.9	32.8	38.4
Somewhat confident	41.1	38.7	37.7	38.5
Slightly/not at all confident	17.0	27.4	29.5	23.2

Young people were also asked whether they felt there were any barriers which may impact on the achievement of their study/work goals after school (Table 10). Overall, seven in ten young people who had experienced homelessness (70.3%) indicated that they felt there would be barriers to the achievement of their study/work goals compared to less than half of young

people who had never experienced homelessness (47.3%). While young people who had experienced homelessness were much more likely to perceive the presence of barriers, those experiencing youth homelessness were the most likely to do so (72.3% compared with 68.6% among young people who had experienced family homelessness).

Table 10: Presence of barriers impacting study/work goals by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Yes	47.3	70.3	72.3	68.6
No	52.7	29.7	27.7	31.4

Respondents who reported perceived barriers to the achievement of their study/work goals were asked to indicate from a number of items which barriers they saw as preventing them from achieving their goals after school. As can be seen in Figure 13 below, the top three barriers perceived by young people who had never experienced homelessness were *academic ability* (20.7%), *financial difficulty* (12.1%) and *admission/job requirements* (11.5%). Comparatively, the top three barriers perceived by young people who had experienced homelessness were *academic ability* (26.2%), *mental health* (25.7%) and *financial difficulty* (24.4%). Importantly, greater proportions of young

people who had experienced homelessness perceived each of the issues listed as a barrier to them achieving their study/work goals after school compared to those who had never experienced homelessness. While responses were fairly similar among the youth homelessness and family homelessness cohorts, those who had experienced youth homelessness were slightly more likely than those who had experienced family homelessness to cite *mental health* (28.0% compared with 22.1%), *family responsibilities* (20.3% compared with 17.3%) and *lack of family support* (14.6% compared with 9.5%) as barriers.

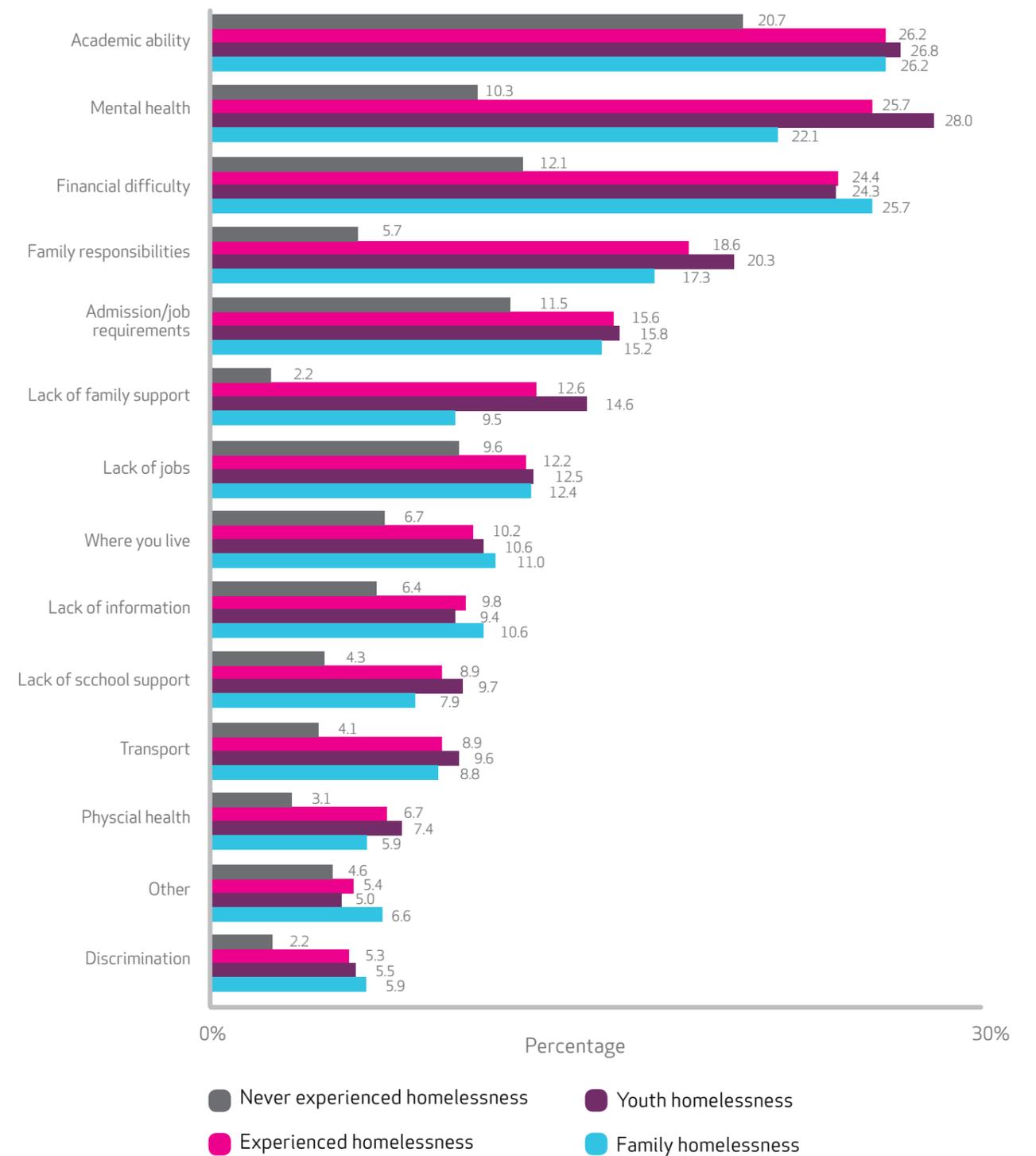


“Well since I had nowhere to call home I dropped everything to find an apartment so I could have a roof over my head as I could not live with my parents. My other number one personal issue this past year was the grades at school as while I was living with my parents I never had my own time to study as I had to babysit my siblings and because I dropped everything to find somewhere to live my school grades dropped significantly and now I have my own place I just need to concentrate on passing every class and attend school every day.” F, 17, Qld



Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Figure 13: Perceived barriers to achieving study/work goals by homelessness status



Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

What young people value

Young people were asked how much they valued *family relationships, financial security, friendships, getting a job, physical and mental health* and *school or study satisfaction*. Responses for these items were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from *extremely important* to *not at all important*. In the table below, results are based on the percentage of young people who rated each item as *extremely* or *very important*. As seen in Table 11, the top three most highly valued items among young people who had experienced some type of homelessness were *friendships* (72.0% *extremely* or *very important*), followed by *physical and mental health* (66.3% *extremely* or *very important*) and *family relationships* (64.1% *extremely* or *very important*). Comparatively, the three most highly valued items among young people who had never experienced homelessness were *family relationships* (84.0% *extremely* or *very important*), *friendships* (82.9% *extremely* or *very important*) and *school or study satisfaction* (75.8% *extremely* or *very important*).

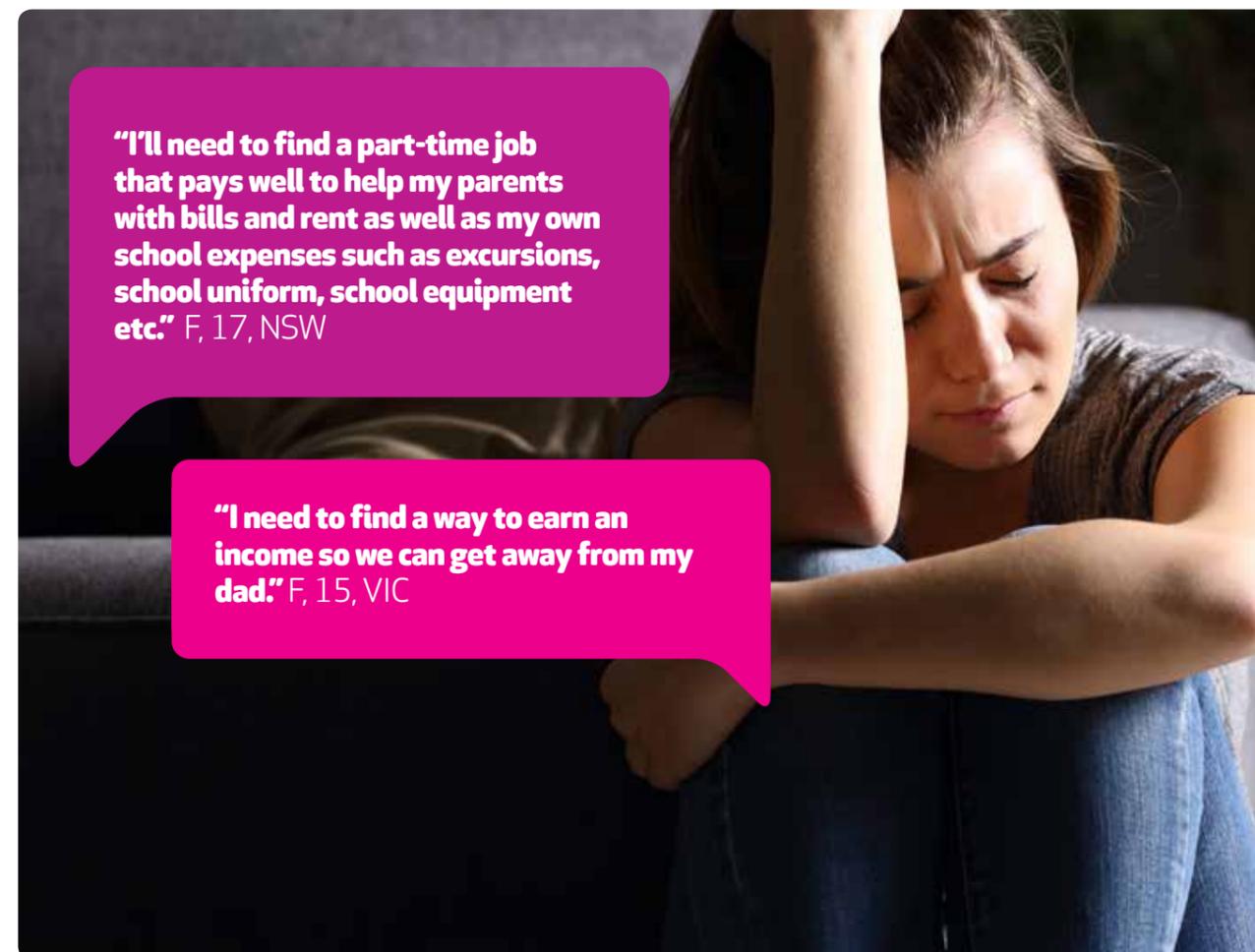
Despite differences in the ordering of items, young people who had never experienced homelessness rated all of the items that made up their top three as more important than young people who had experienced homelessness. Conversely, greater proportions of young people who had experienced homelessness rated *financial security* or *getting a job* as highly important than those who hadn't experienced homelessness (52.8% compared with 47.4% and 49.0% compared with 37.4% respectively).

Comparing the responses of young people who had experienced different types of homelessness, greater proportions of those who had experienced family homelessness than those who had experienced youth homelessness indicated highly valuing *family relationships* (70.7% compared to 60.3%), *school or study satisfaction* (63.8% compared with 58.7%) and *financial security* (56.3% compared with 51.3%). Conversely, a greater proportion of those who had experienced youth homelessness indicated highly valuing *getting a job* (50.8% compared with 45.0%).

Table 11: What young people value (rated as extremely/very important) by homelessness

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Friendships (other than family)	82.9	72.0	71.3	70.6
Physical and mental health	72.9	66.3	65.7	67.7
Family relationships	84.0	64.1	60.3	70.7
School or study satisfaction	75.8	60.9	58.7	63.8
Financial security	47.4	52.8	51.3	56.3
Getting a job	37.4	49.0	50.8	45.0

Note: Items were ranked by summing the responses for *extremely important* and *very important* for each item. Items are listed in order of frequency among total young people who have experienced homelessness.



"I'll need to find a part-time job that pays well to help my parents with bills and rent as well as my own school expenses such as excursions, school uniform, school equipment etc." F, 17, NSW

"I need to find a way to earn an income so we can get away from my dad." F, 15, VIC

Issues of personal concern to young people

The *Youth Survey 2017* asked young people to rank how concerned they had been about a number of issues in the past year. Responses were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from *extremely concerned* to *not at all concerned*. In the table below, results are based on the percentage of young people who selected that they were either *extremely* or *very concerned* about each item. The top three issues of concern for young people who have experienced homelessness were *coping with stress* (57.4% *extremely* or *very concerned*), *school or study problems* (46.4% *extremely* or *very concerned*) and *family conflict* (44.4% *extremely* or *very concerned*). Comparatively, the top three issues of concern for young people who have never experienced homelessness were *coping with stress* (42.6% *extremely* or *very concerned*), *school or study problems*

(33.2% *extremely* or *very concerned*) and *body image* (28.3% *extremely* or *very concerned*). Overall, notably greater proportions of young people who had experienced homelessness were concerned about each of the listed items than young people who had never experienced homelessness. In particular, the biggest gaps in concern between those who had and hadn't experienced homelessness occurred for *family conflict* (44.4% *extremely* or *very concerned* compared with 14.7%) and *depression* (43.8% compared with 18.9%).

Comparing the responses of young people who had experienced different types of homelessness, notably greater proportions of those who had experienced youth homelessness than those who had experienced family homelessness indicated being highly concerned about *family conflict* (49.1% compared with 35.9%), *depression* (47.2% compared with 36.6%) and *suicide* (31.0% compared with 21.6%).

Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Table 12: Issues of personal concern to young people (rated as extremely/very concerned) by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Coping with stress	42.6	57.4	59.5	52.5
School or study problems	33.2	46.4	47.4	43.0
Family conflict	14.7	44.4	49.1	35.9
Depression	18.9	43.8	47.2	36.6
Body image	28.3	43.6	45.4	38.9
Bullying/emotional abuse	11.8	31.2	34.0	26.0
Suicide	9.6	27.9	31.0	21.6
Personal safety	13.0	25.7	27.8	22.7
Discrimination	9.1	18.7	19.6	18.7
Drugs	5.2	14.0	15.7	12.1
Alcohol	4.8	11.5	12.9	10.4
Gambling	2.5	6.5	7.1	6.3

Note: Items were ranked by summing the responses for *extremely concerned* and *very concerned* for each item. Items are listed in order of frequency among total young people who have experienced homelessness.

“My number one issue of concern is mental health ... young people sometimes feel powerless when living in dysfunctional families, or cope with a lot of stress, which can lead to self-harm, negative thoughts and the worst, suicide.” F, 15, WA

they tend to be amplified among young people who have experienced homelessness. What is important is for children or young people to feel supported as they learn to handle these issues. Without good support, children and young people can feel isolated and unable to cope; and this can ultimately lead to disengagement from family and school, heightening the risk of homelessness. Young people commonly get their support from informal networks including their friend/s, sibling/s, parent/s, family friends and relatives, as well as from more formal networks at school through teachers and counsellors and also from the internet. The following section of the report discusses the similarities and differences in support networks for young people who have and have not experienced homelessness, outlining the sources of help they are most likely to consult for assistance.

As can be seen, stresses and concerns like these are commonplace across all of the cohorts, although

Where young people go for help with important issues

As young people navigate the challenges of adolescence and journey towards independence, it is critical that they have trusted sources of support that they can turn to for advice and support. This requires young people being aware of the sources of support on offer and feeling comfortable in accessing these. It is also critical that these sources of support have the resources and skills necessary to be able to support young people with their concerns and circumstances, or are able to refer young people to more appropriate sources of assistance where required. There is a key role for the formal service system, schools and health professionals to play, particularly where a young person lacks the informal support generally provided by family and more immediate social networks.

Young people were asked to indicate from a number of sources where they would go for help with important issues in their lives. Figure 14 below shows the

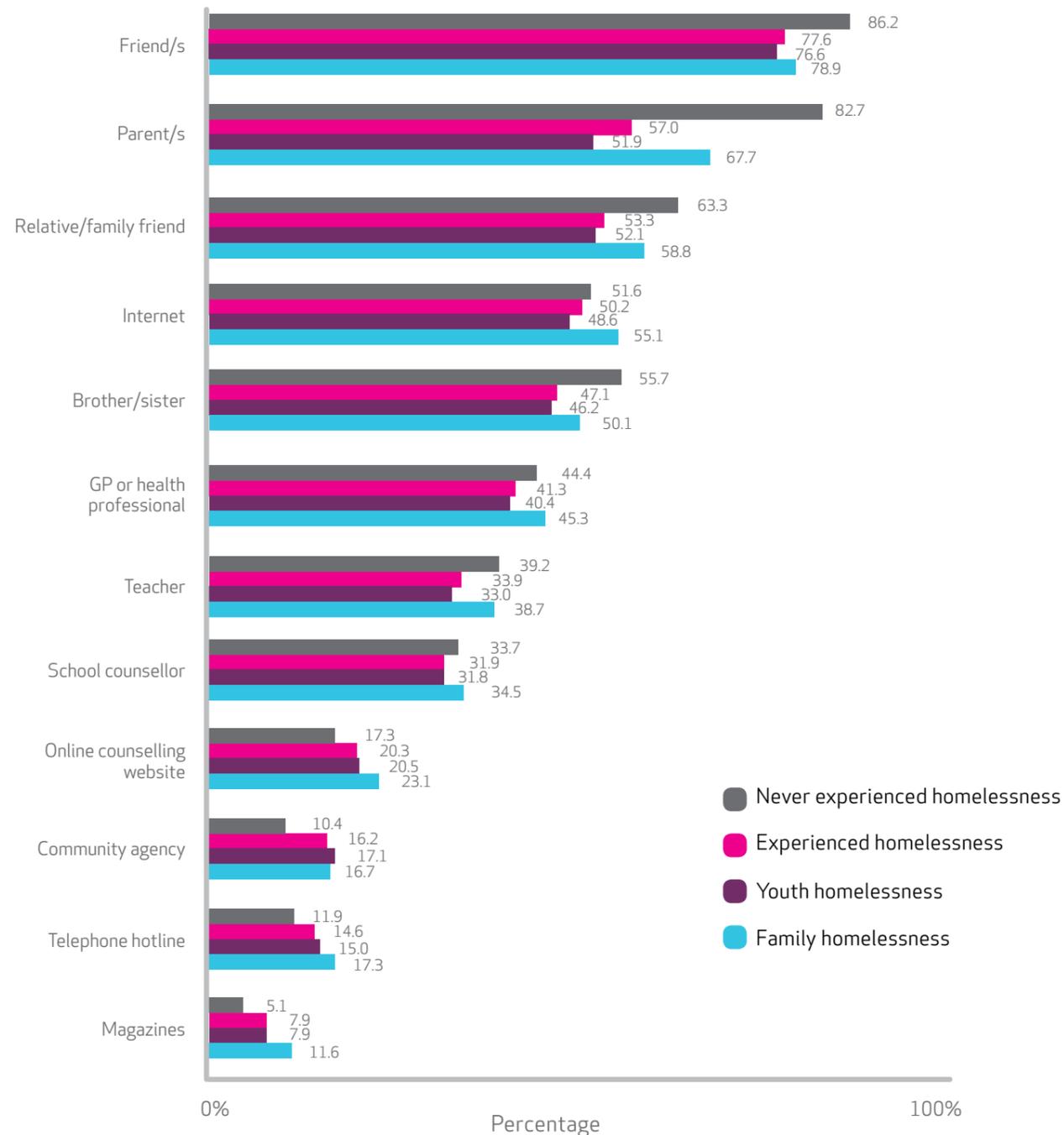
percentage of respondents who indicated that they would go to each source. The top three sources of help for young people who have experienced homelessness were *friend/s* (77.6%), *parent/s* (57.0%) and *relative/family friend* (53.3%). These were also the top three sources of help for young people who have never experienced homelessness, although this group was more likely to indicate they would turn to each of these (at 86.2%, 82.7% and 63.3% respectively).

Young people who had experienced family homelessness were more likely than those who had experienced youth homelessness to turn to almost all of the sources listed for help, most notably *parent/s* (67.7% compared with 51.9%), *relative/family friend* (58.8% compared with 52.1%), *the internet* (55.1% compared with 48.6%) and a *teacher* (38.7% compared with 33.0%). The only exception was a *community agency* to which both groups were similarly likely to turn for help (17.1% of those experiencing youth homelessness compared with 16.7% of those experiencing family homelessness).



Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Figure 14: Where young people go for help with important issues by homelessness status



Family's ability to get along

As noted above, family relationships are one of young people's most highly valued items. Young people also indicate that family is one of the top sources they turn to for help with important issues in their lives, highlighting the vital role that family can play in supporting young people's development. Poor family relationships, however, can have a particularly detrimental impact on a young person's wellbeing and are often strongly associated with youth homelessness. It has been noted that 'the overriding theme of difficult family relationships and home lives – punctuated by personal issues of trauma – is widely recognised as one important aspect of the story of youth homelessness.'⁵⁷

The *Youth Survey 2017* asked respondents how well they thought their family got along. Responses to this question were rated on a 5 point scale ranging from *excellent* to *poor*. As can be seen in Table 13, there were some very notable differences in young people's ratings of their family's ability to get along across the cohorts. More than twice as many young people who had never experienced homelessness rated their family's ability to get along as either *excellent* (30.0%) or *very good* (35.4%) compared to young people who had experienced homelessness (*excellent*: 12.1%; *very good*: 18.7%). Conversely, 45.9% of those who had experienced homelessness rated their family's ability to get along as *fair* (22.2%) or as *poor* (23.7%), compared

to 13.5% of those who had never experienced homelessness (*fair*: 9.6%; *poor*: 3.9%).

Young people who had experienced youth homelessness gave the least positive ratings of their family's ability to get along. Over half of those who had experienced youth homelessness rated their family's ability to get along as only *fair* (24.9%) or as *poor* (27.5%), compared to around one third of those who had experienced family homelessness (*fair*: 16.1%; *poor*: 16.3%).

"Family issues have been a deep concern ... My mother and I have never gotten along well, we always have problems, I have always been scared of her. Over the many years it has caused my mental health to fluctuate including depression which has been having an outflow effect on my studies, how I deal with people and how I am as a person ..."

F, 17, WA

Table 13: Family's ability to get along by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Excellent	30.0	12.1	8.5	20.3
Very good	35.4	18.7	15.5	25.5
Good	21.0	23.3	23.6	21.8
Fair	9.6	22.2	24.9	16.1
Poor	3.9	23.7	27.5	16.3

Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Issues rated as the most important in Australia today

Young people were asked to nominate the three issues they considered were most important in Australia today. The information provided by respondents was categorised and is listed in order of frequency according to total young people who have experienced homelessness in Table 14 below. The top three issues identified by young people across all categories were *mental health*, *alcohol and drugs*, and *equity and discrimination*. Interestingly, regardless of whether or not young people had an experience of homelessness, they were very consistent in the issues as they identified as most important in Australia today, with similar proportions identifying each of the issues listed below (including *homelessness/housing*).

“We need for Australia to acknowledge the fact that mental health is a huge issue and do something about it, and the other issues surrounding mental health such as drug use, homelessness and family breakdowns.”

F, 19, WA

Table 14: Most important issues in Australia today by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Mental health	28.9	31.1	31.6	27.9
Alcohol & drugs	28.0	27.1	28.1	25.0
Equity & discrimination	24.4	22.0	21.5	22.4
Education	11.3	11.4	11.1	11.5
The economy & financial matters	11.2	10.9	10.9	11.3
International relations	12.2	10.2	10.3	9.1
Employment	8.6	9.9	9.6	10.8
Bullying	9.2	9.7	10.0	7.8
Crime, safety & violence	10.1	9.2	9.4	9.0
Homelessness/housing	7.1	7.8	7.8	7.6
Population issues	9.5	7.1	6.4	8.1
The environment	10.2	7.0	6.6	7.4

Note: Issues are listed in order of frequency among total young people who have experienced homelessness

Participation in activities

Young people were asked to identify the activities that they have been involved in over the past year from the list shown in Table 15. The top three activities for both those who had and hadn't experienced homelessness were *sports (as a participant)*, *sports (as a spectator)*, and *volunteer work*. These were also the top three activities for young people who had experienced youth homelessness, while a marginally greater proportion of young people who had experienced family homelessness reported having taken part in *arts/cultural/music activities* than *volunteer work*.

While young people who had never experienced homelessness were more likely than the other cohorts to have taken part in *sports (as a participant)* or *sports (as a spectator)*, participation levels were fairly similar across a number of the other activities. Interestingly, a greater proportion of young people who had experienced homelessness reported having taken part in *youth groups and clubs* (35.5% compared with 29.6%), *environmental groups i.e. environmental groups/activities* (28.8% compared with 22.5%) and *political groups/organisations* (12.2% compared with 7.2%) than those who had never experienced homelessness.

Table 15: Activities young people were involved in over the past year by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Sports (as a participant)	77.0	67.2	66.3	68.3
Sports (as a spectator)	67.2	59.4	59.3	59.0
Volunteer work	54.2	53.7	52.8	56.6
Arts/cultural/music activities	52.6	53.6	52.4	56.9
Student leadership activities	42.5	37.5	36.7	39.8
Youth groups and clubs	29.6	35.5	35.3	39.3
Religious group/activity	29.3	29.1	27.3	34.3
Environmental group/activity	22.5	28.8	28.5	30.6
Political groups/organisations	7.2	12.2	12.1	13.9

Note: Activities are listed in order of frequency among total young people who have experienced homelessness

Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Mental health and wellbeing

As mentioned earlier, previous research has found that young people who are homeless exhibit higher levels of psychological distress, have a much higher incidence of reported self-harm and attempted suicide and have a higher prevalence of mental health conditions than the general population.⁵⁸ The *Youth Survey 2017* asked young people a range of questions concerning their happiness, mental health and wellbeing. The results support previous research findings that young people who have experienced homelessness fare more poorly on these indicators.

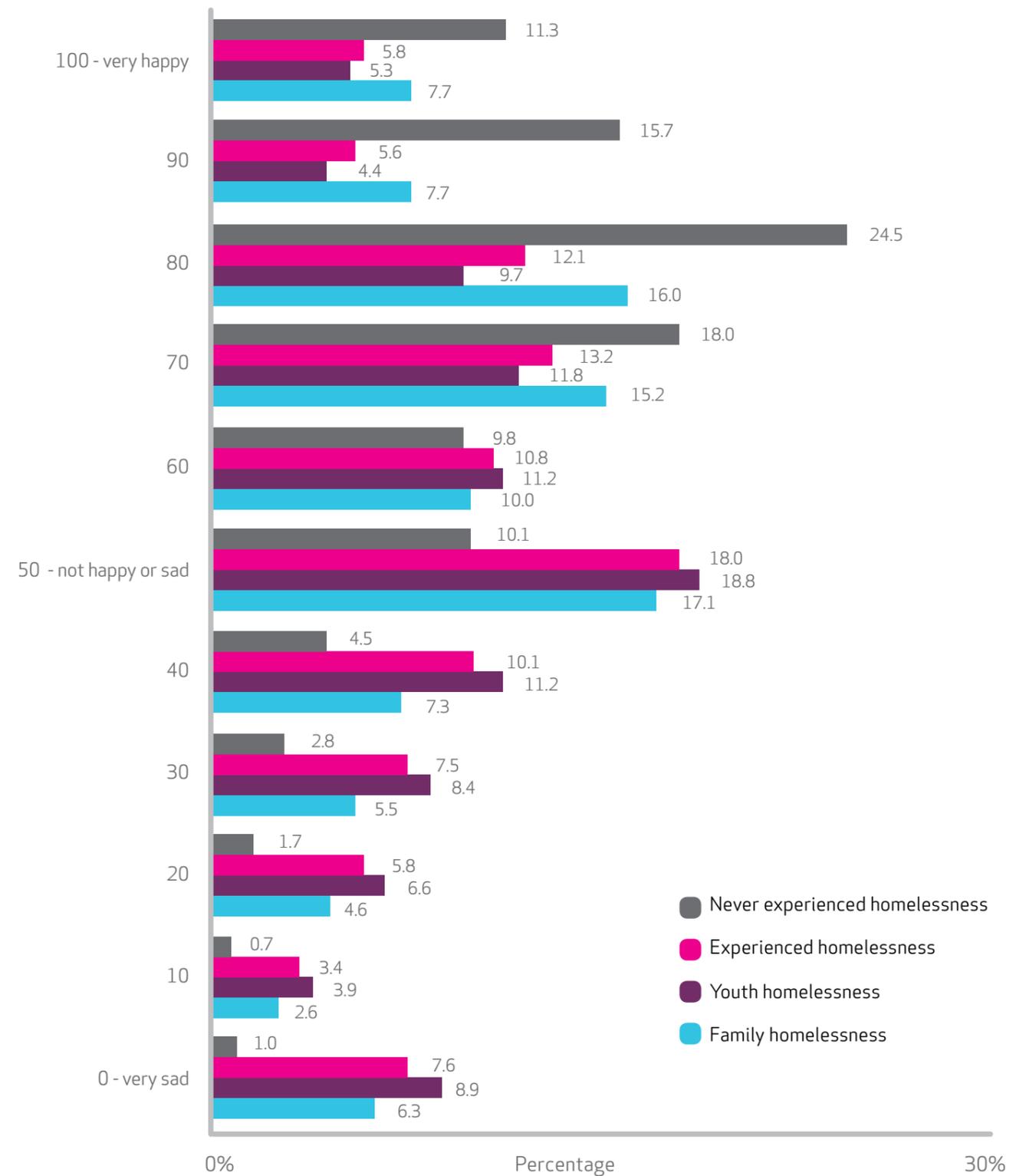
The *Youth Survey 2017* asked young people to rate how happy they were with their life as a whole on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being *very sad*, 5 *not happy or sad* and 10 *very happy*. In line with recommendations from the authors of this question, responses were standardised on a scale of 0-100, with 100 being the happiest.

As Figure 15 shows, there were very stark differences in response to this question among those who had

and hadn't experienced homelessness. While around 7 in 10 young people who had never experienced homelessness (69.5%) responded in the range 70 to 100, indicating that they felt happy about their lives overall, only 36.7% of young people who had experienced homelessness responded in this range. Young people who had experienced youth homelessness were far less likely than young people who had experienced family homelessness to respond in this positive 70 to 100 range (31.2% compared with 46.6%).

Conversely, young people who had experienced homelessness were almost four times more likely than young people who had never experienced homelessness to respond in the range 0 to 30 indicating low levels of happiness with their life as a whole (24.3% compared with 6.2%). Almost three in ten of those who had experienced youth homelessness responded in this 0 to 30 range (27.8%) compared with around one in five of those who had experienced family homelessness (19.0%).

Figure 15: Happiness with life as a whole by homelessness status



Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Mission Australia's *Youth Survey* includes a widely used and accepted measure of non-specific psychological distress known as the Kessler 6 (K6).^{60,61} The K6 consists of a brief six item scale that asks about the experience of anxiety and depressive symptoms during the past four weeks. It has been shown to be a useful tool in screening for probable serious mental illness, and it has been shown to be particularly powerful at detecting depressive and anxiety disorders.^{62,63,64} Based on established scoring criteria, the K6 has been used to classify respondents into two groups – those with a 'probable serious mental illness' and those with 'no probable serious mental illness'.⁶⁵

people who had and hadn't experienced homelessness (and also between those experiencing different types of homelessness). Concerningly, almost half of all young people who had experienced homelessness were categorised as having a probable serious mental illness, compared to just under one fifth of young people who had never experienced homelessness. The prevalence of probable serious mental illness was particularly pronounced among young people who had experienced youth homelessness (52.0% categorised as having a probable serious mental illness, compared to 41.8% of those who had experienced family homelessness).

As Table 16 reveals, there were very marked differences in findings to this question among young

Table 16: Probable serious mental illness by homelessness status

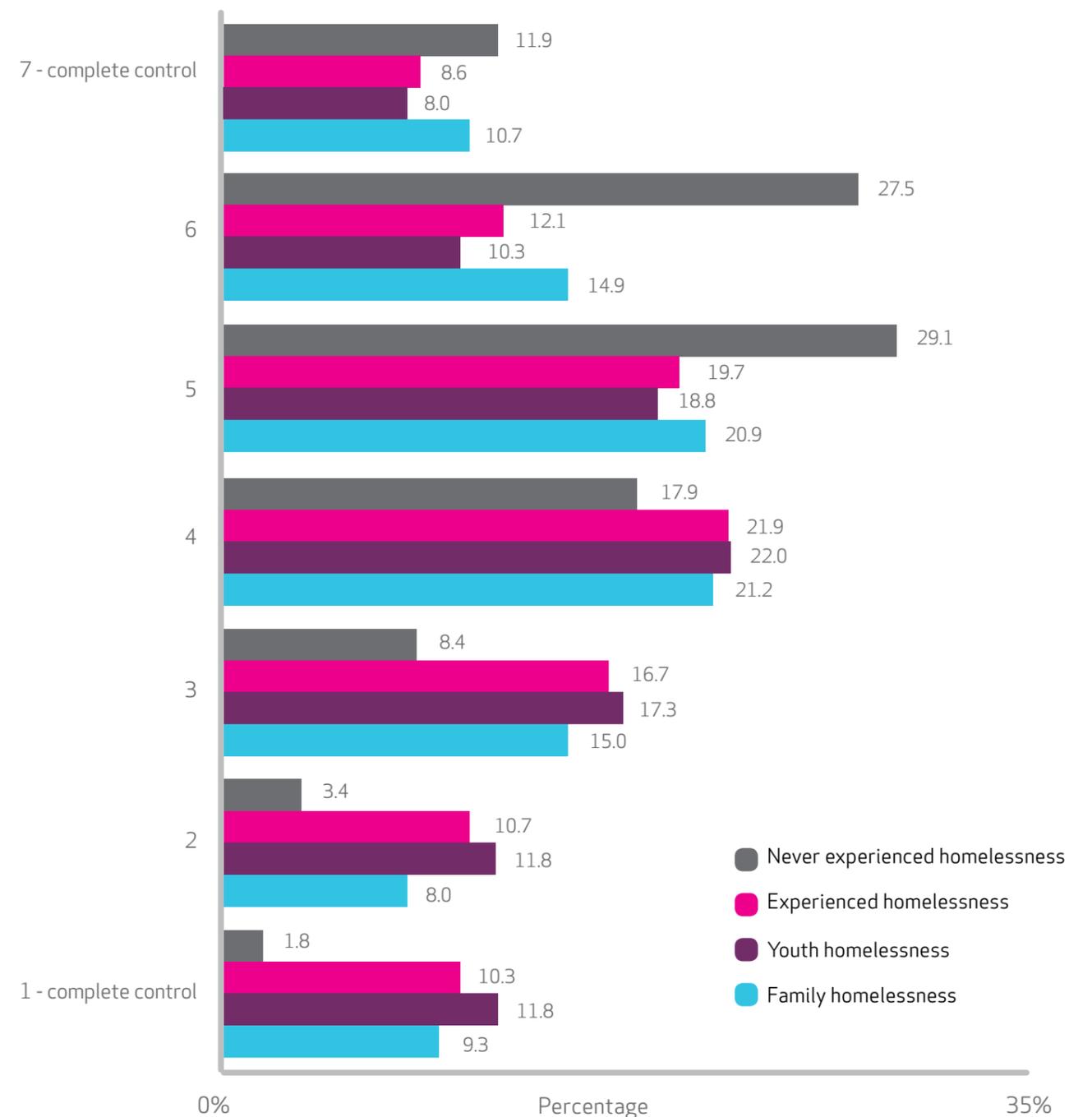
	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
No	81.2	52.1	48.0	58.2
Yes	18.8	47.9	52.0	41.8

An important relationship between mental health and couch surfing behaviour was also revealed by Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2015*, which found that young people meeting the criteria for a probable serious mental illness were 3.5 times more likely to indicate having couch surfed in the past three years compared to young people without a probable serious mental illness (32.2% versus 8.6%).

The *Youth Survey 2017* also asked young people to rate how much control they feel they have over their life on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 being *no control* and 7 being *complete control*. It is important

that young people have a sense of control for their general emotional wellbeing and also as it encourages planning and the development of aspirations for the future. As can be seen in Figure 16, young people who had experienced homelessness were over five times more likely to report having *no control* over their life than young people who had never experienced homelessness (10.3% compared with 1.8%). Responses to this question were fairly similar among young people experiencing youth and family homelessness.

Figure 16: Sense of control over life by homelessness status

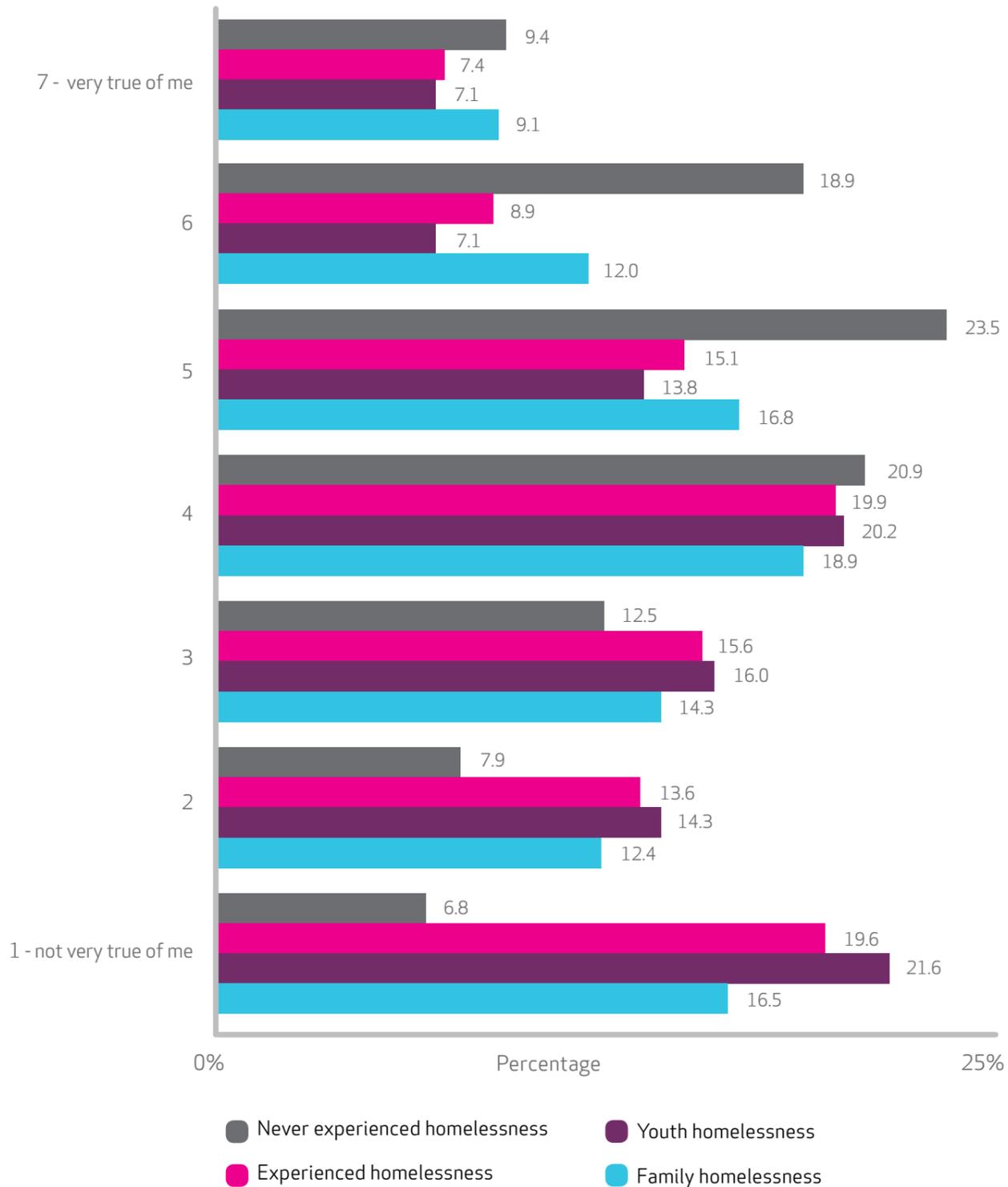


Respondents were also asked to rate how true the statement 'I have high self-esteem' was of them on a scale from 1-7, with 1 being *not very true of me* and 7 being *very true of me*. Young people who had experienced homelessness were almost three times as likely as young people who had never experienced homelessness to report that this statement was *not*

very true of me (19.6% compared with 6.8%). Once again, responses were fairly similar among young people experiencing youth and family homelessness, although those experiencing youth homelessness were slightly more likely to report having high self-esteem was *not very true of me* (21.6% compared with 16.5%).

Youth Survey 2017 findings (cont)

Figure 17: Agreement with the statement 'I have high self-esteem' by homelessness status



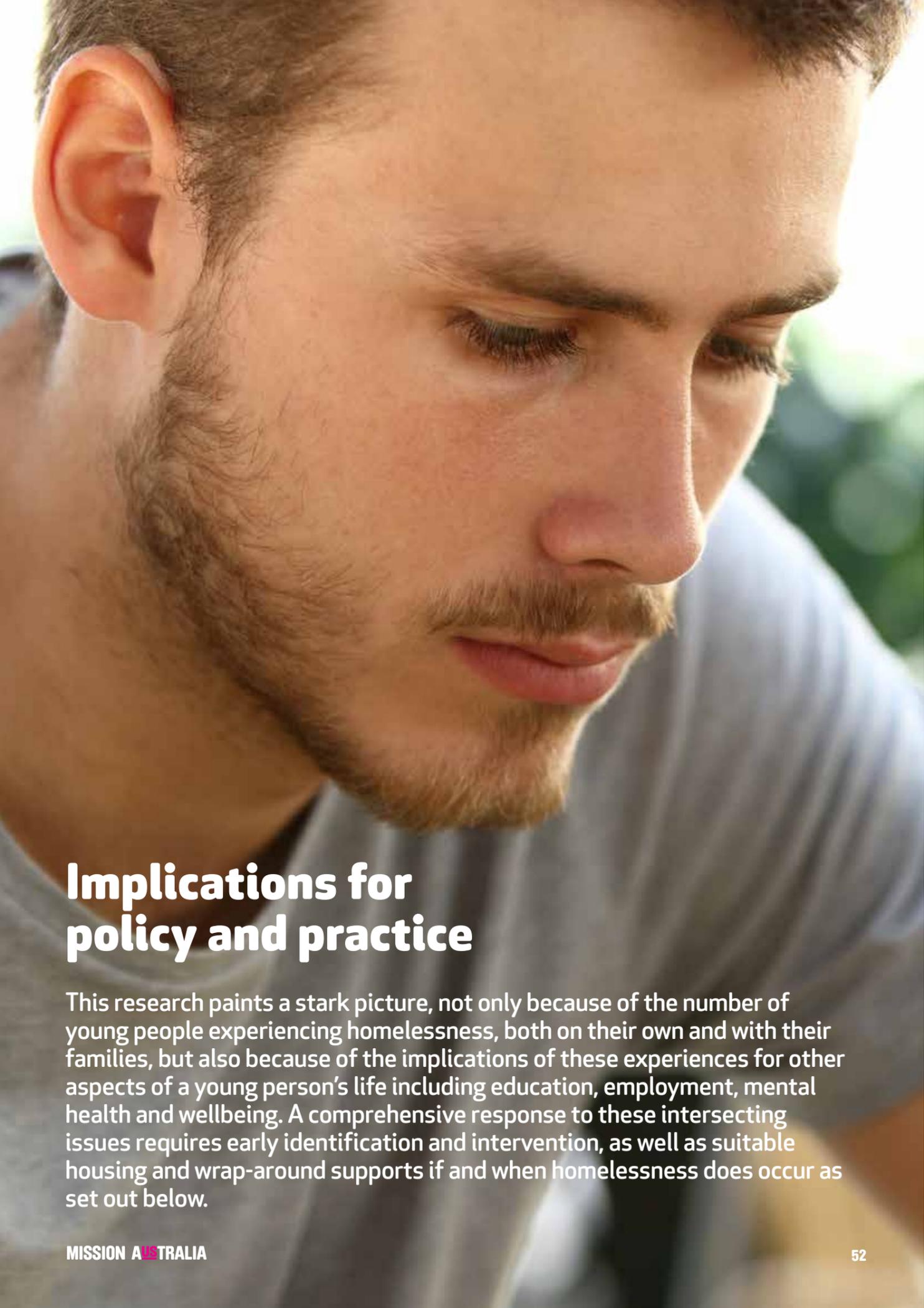
Feelings about the future

Finally, young people were asked how positive they felt about the future, with responses rated on a 5 point scale from *very positive* to *very negative*. In line with the findings on mental health and happiness, results were found to be notably less favourable among young people who had experienced homelessness compared to those who had never had this experience. Overall, around two thirds (66.9%) of young people who had never experienced homelessness reported feeling *very positive/positive* about the future, compared to only 44.8% of those who had experienced homelessness. Those who had experienced youth homeless were less likely than those who had experienced family homelessness to feel *very positive/positive* about the future (41.9% compared with 53.3%). They were more likely than those experiencing family homelessness to feel *negative/very negative* (21.2% compared with 15.1%).

"I need something to look forward to, but the future is so scary and there is so much pressure and no promise of a job after possibly years of studying like there is no point, the cost of living is rising and my life is looking rather unexcitable."
F, 17, NSW

Table 17: Feelings about the future by homelessness status

	Young people who have never experienced homelessness %	Young people who have experienced homelessness %	Youth homelessness %	Family homelessness %
Very positive/positive	66.9	44.8	41.9	53.3
Neither	25.3	35.7	36.8	31.6
Negative/very negative	7.9	19.4	21.2	15.1



Implications for policy and practice

This research paints a stark picture, not only because of the number of young people experiencing homelessness, both on their own and with their families, but also because of the implications of these experiences for other aspects of a young person's life including education, employment, mental health and wellbeing. A comprehensive response to these intersecting issues requires early identification and intervention, as well as suitable housing and wrap-around supports if and when homelessness does occur as set out below.

Identification, Prevention and Early Intervention

Identification, prevention and early intervention responses are crucial to reducing youth homelessness.

The vast majority of children live with and receive support from a family as they mature towards independence. Many young people and families experience stressors, which can include family conflict, mental health or substance misuse issues affecting themselves or another family member, parental or self-imposed expectations of academic or work performance, or DFV.⁶⁷ Families with low incomes more frequently experience other stressors, including unemployment, poverty and unstable housing.

As noted above, when young people feel that they cannot go home, including for reasons of family conflict, many couch surf for intermittent periods with friends or non-immediate family. In many cases, the young

person will move back home. Where this is not safe or possible, some may transition to independent living, while others will fall into a pathway of more entrenched homelessness.⁶⁸

A very promising model of early identification is the creation of place-based coalitions of schools and services (COSS), aiming to identify young people at risk of homelessness and disengagement from school and intervene quickly to divert them from those journeys. It includes universal screening in local schools and the provision of support to schools, young people and their families through a collaborative network of partners including family and youth services.

This approach was first trialled in The Geelong Project (TGP) which will be expanded to more schools following the recent Victorian budget and will be further piloted in New South Wales as part of the NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018-23. Community of Schools and Youth Services SA is also funding the University of South Australia to pilot a COSS SA from 2016-2018.⁶⁹

Community of Schools and Youth Services (COSS)

The Geelong Project has modelled a 'community of schools and youth services' approach to early intervention by using population screening, a flexible practice framework and youth-focused, family-centred case management, as well as a collective impact approach. The model builds-in a follow-up process and support to reduce homelessness, and achieve sustainable education and lifetime outcomes.⁷⁰



For some young people, early intervention may involve reconciliation with their family when it is safe and feasible to do so, or being assisted to live independently with appropriate supports where their family cannot provide a safe place to live. For young people, who experience homelessness with their family, supports can be put in place for the family as a whole to address any underlying issues such as financial stress, DFV, or the impact of poor health or mental illness.

Family reconciliation is crucial for many young people at the early intervention stage. Wrap-around supports

that facilitate family reconciliation should be offered to the young person and their family, including counselling and interventions that address underlying issues. Specialist services, such as Reconnect, can assist young people and their families with reconciliation and reconnection. Where it is safe to do so, they can teach skills such as conflict resolution and resilience, to enable better family functioning, so that the young person can return or stay at home.

Implications for policy and practice (cont)

Reconnect

The Commonwealth funded Reconnect program uses community-based early intervention services to assist young people aged 12-18 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families. Reconnect assists young people to stabilise their living situation through early interventions including counselling and mediation (where appropriate) and to improve their level of engagement with family, work, education, training and their local community.⁷¹

Reconnect is also able to broker support from other services to provide additional resources

to the young person, including accommodation and specialised mental health services. Mission Australia's evaluation of the Reconnect program found that young people who participated in this program demonstrated positive outcomes in relation to control over life, housing permanency, and relationships within families and with the community.⁷²

Several of our Reconnect services have embedded themselves in local schools to identify young people needing support before they disengage from education.



Case study

Andrew* was a year 9 student when he was referred to Reconnect. His parents separated when he was young which impacted on his engagement at school. Andrew struggled to make positive friendships and was often targeted by other students, which was effecting his self-confidence.

Andrew was provided with practical and emotional support at school each week as well as new strategies to help him communicate with his parents, teachers and students. Andrew took part in individual and group activities outside of school, such as walks, bike riding and ten-pin bowling, to help build his confidence in social settings.

Support was also provided to both his parents in having open discussions with Andrew about his progress at school and to assist his parents to form better relationships with Andrew's school.

As a result, Andrew's relationships with his parents

improved and he continued to live with both parents alternatively. Andrew's self-confidence improved dramatically, he established positive friendships and approached his youth worker to inform him that he was happy and felt that he no longer required support. Feedback from the school guidance officer was that Andrew's engagement has noticeably improved.

*Client names have been changed to protect their privacy.



Other early intervention supports can include counselling for mental health issues, access to secure and appropriate housing, and educational or employment support. It is also important that youth

services have capacity to work with the whole family in order to support the young person effectively and address any intergenerational issues.

Northern Sydney Youth Homelessness Service

Mission Australia's Northern Sydney Youth Homelessness service provides early intervention support for young people aged 12-24 years, and their families, to reduce and/or prevent homelessness and family breakdown through case management or therapeutic counselling practices in coordination with other sector organisations. The aim of the service is to support young people and their families who are experiencing issues that may place them 'at risk of homelessness' and

address the barriers which prevent them from maintaining safe and secure housing. Young people experiencing issues relating to mental health, drug and alcohol misuse, disengagement from school or relationship breakdown are considered at higher risk of homelessness.

The service focuses on developing the young persons' ability to enhance their independence and maintain a level of connectedness through employment, education and social activities whilst developing their own personal skills through enhancing their ability to make positive life choices.



It is crucial that interventions happen early, ideally before a crisis eventuates but certainly before behaviours get entrenched and homelessness becomes long-term. Early identification and intervention is also cost effective, as costs increase as problems worsen

and become more difficult to resolve. One key study concluded 'intervening early to stop children and young people becoming homeless could save taxpayers millions of dollars in health, legal and custodial services.'⁷³

Implications for policy and practice (cont)

Educational Engagement

Being engaged in education or employment can be a protective factor for young people experiencing homelessness. Specific programs aimed at educational

engagement, accessible alternative learning environments and education focussed supports embedded in specialist homelessness services can all play a part in supporting young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.



The Navigator Program - Victoria

The Navigator Program is a Victorian State Government funded program aiming to support young people aged 12-17 who have disengaged from education.

The Navigator Program provides intensive outreach support; individually tailored one-to-one support; holistic preliminary assessment of the young person's learning needs, their capabilities and aspirations; coaching and mentoring to

enhance wellbeing, develop resilience, self-efficacy and social skills; and also facilitates referrals to other community service providers.

Mission Australia delivers the Navigator Program in the Bayside Peninsula region, covering 7 Local Government Areas. The 2018 Victorian State Budget committed \$44 million over 4 years for expansion of the Navigator Program, to help young people aged 12-17 who have been disengaged get back into education.

Flexible Learning Options - South Australia

Flexible Learning Options (FLO) was implemented from 2007 onwards by the South Australian Government as a social inclusion initiative to help address poor school retention rates. The program provides casework support and individualised and flexible learning programs for students aged 13-19, young parents and young people with disabilities up to 25 years who have disengaged with mainstream schooling.

FLO offers a flexible, person-centred, practical approach to address the complex issues that stand between a young person and their future aspirations, while also working to immediately ensure stable reconnection of that young person with learning in a way that works best for them. This program is vital in helping vulnerable young people to build important life skills, which

increases their potential to become productive, responsible and socially engaged and informed adults.

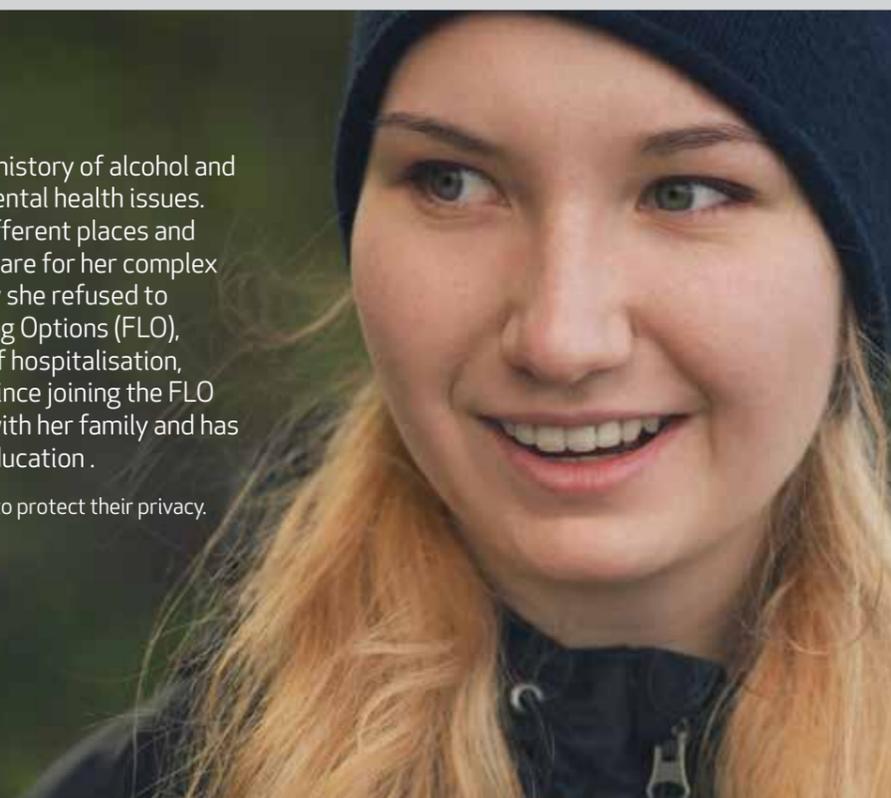
An independent evaluation was completed in 2018 that clearly demonstrates that the MA FLO program has a significant and positive impact on the lives of the students. In many instances FLO attendance was described by students as being personally transformative, potentially life-saving and a significant driver of re-engagement and social inclusion. As a result of attending the program and the casework support received, the evaluation showed the majority of FLO students were able to identify educational or job-related goals, as well as discover their ambitions and put strategies in place to achieve them. The proximity and availability of casework support was also found to be critical to the ongoing wellbeing of students.



Case study

Zoe* is a 14-year-old with a history of alcohol and drug misuse and complex mental health issues. She was moving between different places and her parents were unable to care for her complex mental health needs. Initially she refused to engage with Flexible Learning Options (FLO), but after several incidents of hospitalisation, Zoe agreed to participate. Since joining the FLO program, Zoe has reunited with her family and has started to re-engage with education.

*Client names have been changed to protect their privacy.



Implications for policy and practice (cont)

Education Support Worker Model

Mission Australia trialled an Education Support Worker in our Wagga Wagga Youth Residential Service and saw great benefit. This flexible and socially inclusive practice not only saw improved outcomes in terms of sustainable and secure accommodation, but improvement across many

life domains, including education, training and employment. The education support worker focused on the education, training and employment domain of a young person's case plan, working with the young person and their support network to overcome barriers and increase motivation and capacity to re-engage in education, training and employment.



Outreach to engage young people with support services

Young people are often not aware of the supports available to them when facing difficulties including the risk of homelessness. In these instances, advocates play an essential role in assisting young people to navigate complex and unfamiliar service structures.

Outreach services often fill this role as they are able to go to the areas where young people spend their

time and can develop rapport, care for immediate needs, and provide linkages to services and resources to help young people navigate the service system.⁷⁴ Outreach programs can build connections within local communities and develop relationships with young people due to the more informal and flexible service delivery model. Therefore, outreach services should be funded as part of an integrated service response, especially for young people who are often hard to reach.



Youth Beat

Youth Beat is a Mission Australia safety and early intervention program supporting young people on the streets of South East Tasmania and Perth's metro area. The Youth Beat van and foot patrols provide outreach to the streets and skate parks to engage young people, some of whom are homeless, intoxicated and drug affected, have physical and mental health issues or are displaying anti-social behaviour.

Youth Beat has the ability to assertively reach, quickly assess and respond to the immediate and longer term needs of young people. This includes referral to accommodation, medical care, meals, showers, harm minimisation and advice on sexual, physical and mental health services. The support needed is often ongoing and recurring. Youth Beat aims to be a constant, accessible and non-

threatening entry point into the support services available to young people.

Youth Beat offers a wide range of services and approaches such as:

- Support for young people and their families, including referrals to counsellors, specialist and place-based services;
- Engagement activities based on the young person's needs and interests;
- Identifying and addressing anti-social behaviour and risks to community safety; and
- Navigation of the support system for young people in crisis.

Youth Beat works hard to build trust and confidence with young people and works collaboratively with other agencies that support young people in need.

Implications for policy and practice (cont)

Young people leaving care

Young people leaving the out-of-home care system have poorer educational, health and employment outcomes than their peers.⁷⁵ Nearly 35% of young people who leave out-of-home-care become homeless within the first year⁷⁶ and some care-leavers experience a multitude of negative outcomes including substance misuse, mental health issues, unstable housing, periods of unemployment and dependence on welfare benefits, and offending.⁷⁷

The *Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia* report found that 63% of the homeless young participants had been placed in some form of out-of-home care before the age of 18, a significantly higher proportion than a comparable group of young disadvantaged job-seekers (18%).⁷⁸ More needs to be done to ensure that young people leaving out-of-home care are not exited

into homelessness as a matter of priority. This includes improved exit planning, increased availability of wrap-around supports, the option to extend care placements and affordable and appropriate independent accommodation options.

All states and territories require young people to have a 'leaving care' plan, which includes a housing option. However, a 2013 survey showed that 64% of young people did not have such a plan.⁷⁹ When transition planning is done, often it is too late or inadequate in terms of finding housing and preventing homelessness.

Post-care programs for young people transitioning from out-of-home care are only available to a limited number of young people and for the rest support is minimal. Programs such as Springboard in Victoria and the Premier's Youth Initiative in NSW should be made more widely available and replicated in other states.

The Premier's Youth Initiative (PYI) – New South Wales

The Premier's Youth Initiative (PYI) is an initiative that identifies and targets young people leaving out-of-home care (OOHC) who are likely to be homeless or at risk of homelessness on exit from care and diverts them from entering the homelessness service system.

The program expands on the current aftercare service by offering a suite of interventions aimed at bridging the gap between OOHC support and independent living. These interventions target and build the long-term capacity and resilience of young people with the aim to permanently divert them from the homelessness service system.



Springboard – Victoria

The Springboard program provides intensive youth focussed assistance to those aged 16-18 years in residential out-of-home care, or up to 21 years who have left residential care. It is intended to support both these groups to gain secure long-term employment by re-engaging with appropriate education, training and/or supported employment opportunities. This program is also available for those who are currently in or have been in foster care or kinship care and are disengaged from education, training or employment.

The program provides young people with flexible one-on-one case work support that helps them identify and negotiate access to appropriate education, training or employment opportunities. The young people in the program tend to have complex needs and multiple barriers and are likely to have experienced childhood trauma as well as multiple disruptions to their education. It is a culturally sensitive service with expertise in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and refugees.

Springboard is funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services.



For many people, simply reaching 18 years of age does not mean that they do not need ongoing support. Some states have agreed to provide support for young people in out of home care until the age of 21 in line with international advances. Extended care supports have resulted in better engagement with education and employment, improved health and reduced interaction with the justice system and we support these initiatives and encourage all governments to adopt them.⁸⁰

Young people leaving other institutionalised settings including acute mental health care facilities and the

juvenile justice system will also need intensive supports when integrating back to the community. Mission Australia recommends that governments adopt a 'zero tolerance' approach to young people becoming homeless when they exit any form of state care. Supports need to be provided to young people well before they exit these institutions and governments should be held accountable for these outcomes over the medium term.

Implications for policy and practice (cont)

Family homelessness

As noted above, in this report family homelessness has been used to describe the situation of young people who have experienced time with no fixed address or living in a refuge or transitional housing with a parent or guardian present during some or all of these experiences.

This research indicates there is a strong link between young people who were concerned about family conflict and homelessness. However, whilst higher than the non-homelessness cohort, young people who experienced homelessness with their family were slightly less likely to be highly concerned about a range of issues compared to young people who experienced youth homelessness without a parent or guardian (see table 12).

In recognising family as a strong protective factor for young people, we need to ensure that the policy framework works to keep families together including through the prevention of domestic and family violence and ensuring the affordability and availability of housing that is suitable for a variety of families.

Australia has a shortfall of over 500,000 rental dwellings which are both affordable and available to the lowest income households.⁸¹ Private rental properties that are affordable for those on low incomes are especially scarce in areas with more employment opportunities.

A significant investment in social and affordable housing is required to address this shortage and reduce the risk of homelessness for families. Families living in social and affordable housing can then be provided with tailored support co-ordination to link family members to other supports that they may need.

The availability of suitable housing is essential to reducing homelessness and a safe home is a key foundation for a young person's wellbeing. A secure home is also widely recognised as providing a fundamental basis for building positive mental health⁸² and to impact positively on family stability.⁸³

Continuity of housing is also important to support educational and social development, as it can provide a consistent school and a stable social network.⁸⁴ Stable housing is a platform for other supports around the family, such as social services and having someone you can turn to in a crisis.⁸⁵

As part of the Everybody's Home campaign we are calling for an investment in 500,000 new social and affordable homes by 2030. This includes 300,000 new social and Aboriginal housing properties; and a new incentive or subsidy to leverage super fund and other private sector investment in 200,000 low cost rental properties.

DFV also continues to be a major driver of homelessness.⁸⁶ In 2016-17 40% of clients seeking specialist homelessness services were experiencing domestic and family violence and nearly half (48%) were single parents with a child or children.⁸⁷

Increased efforts are required to reduce domestic and family violence and associated homelessness including: education on healthy relationships in schools; family early intervention programs; improved training of first to know agencies; legal and policing reform to protect the rights of people experiencing DFV; men's behaviour change programs and broader efforts to address underlying gender equality and rigid gender stereotypes. Resources are also required for parents and young people who need to leave home to be safe including crisis accommodation and rapid rehousing programs.⁸⁸

Programs that allow young people to remain connected to social networks, community support and schooling and prevent homelessness, including 'safe at home' programs such as *Staying Home Leaving Violence* in NSW should be expanded and replicated.

Women's Safe Houses - Western NSW

Mission Australia runs three safe houses located in Western New South Wales, at Lightning Ridge, Walgett and Brewarrina. These Safe Houses operate as crisis centres and have a focus on assisting women and children escaping domestic and family violence with a focus on Aboriginal women. Transitional accommodation assists women and families who have been through the Safe House program and cannot return home. While a woman or family is in transitional housing,

staff assist them with living skills programs, financial stability, tenancy supports, children's educational engagement, liaising with health providers and progressing into more permanent stable housing. Group-based parenting and behavioural programs are also offered such as Seasons for Healing, Aboriginal Triple P, Incredible Years, Circle of Security, 123 Magic, Keeping Children Safe, LoveBites, Through Young Black Eyes, Rage (Anger Management), Managing the Bull and Act Now Stronger Together. Community outreach including intensive case management is provided for clients in the community with complex needs.



Implications for policy and practice (cont)

Suitable housing for young people with supports as needed

In some circumstances it will not be safe or in the best interest of the young person to live with their family. In such cases, alternative accommodation must be made available to young people including access to supportive accommodation models that help young people gain the skills needed for independent living.

Foyer-like approaches are becoming increasingly common, both in Australia and internationally. This model assists young people, usually aged 16-24 years, to engage in education and employment, and gradually to reduce their dependence on social services. Youth Foyers generally have self-contained accommodation,

on-site support workers, education programs, variable levels of support where a young person can progress to more independent living, onsite facilities (for example health services) and social enterprises (such as a café). Participation in education, training and employment is a condition of the accommodation.⁸⁹

However, Youth Foyer approaches do not suit every young person experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Supportive accommodation is also needed for the most marginalised young people, particularly those with alcohol and drug problems, mental health issues and contact with the justice system who may need more intensive supports before they re-engage with education and employment.

Youth Accommodation Support Services (YASS)

Operating from a Perth residential facility, this service provides 24/7 accommodation and support for up to six young people, aged 15 to 18 years, who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.

Providing holistic support for up to three months, the service aims to help young people to address underlying issues (e.g. drug and alcohol issues, mental health and family relationships), increase life skills (e.g. financial management, cooking), transition to stable long-term accommodation and engage/re-engage with education or employment.

There are also four transitional beds on site, which can be occupied for up to one year by young people aged from 16 to 25 years who are more independent and require less support.



Case study

Alice* is a 17-year-old Aboriginal young person who has experienced homelessness. Her parents were estranged and her mother was sleeping rough and had substance misuse issues. Due to these issues, Alice left home when she was 13 years old. She fell pregnant with her first child at 13 and moved away with her partner. At the age of 16 she was pregnant with her second child. Her relationship with her partner became untenable due to domestic violence and on one occasion she was hospitalised due to head injuries that required her to be on life support for 3 days.

Alice once reported that her former partner kidnapped the children and when they were eventually returned the children had bruises, cigarette burns and one child had a broken nose. Following this incident, the children were taken into care by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (DCPFS) and were placed in the care of a family member with visitation rights.

By the time Alice was referred to YASS, she was experiencing homelessness, dependent on prescription drugs, was experiencing mental

health issues and pregnant with her third child. YASS case workers registered her with a local medical practice and supported her to attend all her medical appointments including antenatal appointments. Alice was also supported to manage her emotions and maintain her accommodation using the YASS Behavioural Management and Support Strategy. She received this mental health support while she was at YASS and has continued to engage in her new accommodation service.

Alice was supported by YASS to re-engage in education and was also supported to address some of her legal issues including appearing before the court in relation to custody of her children. Alice left YASS in October 2017 and moved into housing with a Mums & Baby Program. Due to the support that was in place for Alice, she was able to keep her third child in her care. Alice maintained phone contact with YASS to provide updates on the birth, development of parenting skills and her postnatal experience. Alice is still at her new accommodation and continues to engage with a range of services.

*Client names have been changed to protect their privacy.

Implications for policy and practice (cont)

Eastern Murrumbidgee Youth Services – EMYS (Verity House in Wagga Wagga)

Eastern Murrumbidgee Youth Services (EMYS) provide support to vulnerable young people who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of being without a home. EMYS provide crisis accommodation for young people aged 16 or 17 years of age. The staff assist and support young people to achieve their goals and overcome issues that can lead to homelessness.

The service has an adolescent and family counsellor present one day per week, with whom, accommodated young people can safely engage in mediation with family members and access one on one general counselling. Centrelink's Community Outreach worker visits the service regularly to support young people to commence

their application for Centrelink payments where necessary. There is also a financial counsellor who visits the service to provide budgeting advice and support. Recently Riverina Community College have started to run short courses, such as jewellery making, hospitality, working well with others and barista courses.

Eastern Murrumbidgee Youth Service, also provides outreach services to young people aged between 16 years and up to 25 years. Supports include: maintaining current housing or applying for independent housing; restoration of positive relationships with family members; social inclusion; education and employment supports; referrals to specialist services such as mental health, alcohol and drug and domestic violence supports.



Many of our rural, regional and remote services tell us that when they are supporting a young person experiencing homelessness, there are no available accommodation options to which they can be referred. Eastern Murrumbidgee Youth Services in Wagga Wagga provides a vital accommodation model, that should be replicated in other rural and regional areas.

In addition, there is simply not enough affordable and available supportive housing, social housing or affordable private rental accommodation in Australia, which increases youth homelessness rates. There is a particular shortage of properties suited to young people, such as one-bedroom apartments located close to employment prospects and transport.

Additionally, young people face further challenges when competing with other potential renters, including lack of a rental history, assumptions about unstable incomes and prejudice against young people. Vulnerable young people are also unlikely to have adequate savings to pay

a bond, further precluding them from the private rental market.

The 500,000 new social and affordable homes we are calling for as part of the Everybody's Home campaign will ease rental stress for young people living independently as well as young people experiencing homelessness with their families.

Rental stress is also exacerbated for young people due to the low rates of Youth Allowance and Commonwealth Rent Assistance, as well as higher rates of unemployment and marginal employment. Housing young people is also costlier for community housing providers than other population groups, because youth incomes are so low and the level of support required for young people can be intensive. We are therefore also calling for an increase to Youth Allowance and Commonwealth Rental Assistance to provide immediate relief of rental stress faced by young people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

As indicated by the 2016 census data, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accounted for 20% of all people experiencing homelessness.⁹⁰ They also represented close to a quarter of the people who received services from specialist homelessness services in 2016/17 financial year.⁹¹

A major driver of this over-representation is the shortage of adequate and culturally appropriate housing, including in rural towns and remote communities, meaning that children and young people are growing up in severely overcrowded conditions.

Some inroads have been made by the increase in housing delivered through National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) and National Partnership on Remote Housing (NPRH) to address overcrowding in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.⁹² However, a long-term sustainable funding approach is required to increase housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and we are concerned that this agreement has expired without a replacement in sight.

Improving the housing supply will not only reduce homelessness, but also improve health and education outcomes while ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people can receive the benefit of strong support from their families and communities.

Wrap-around person-centred approaches

Young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness may require a combination of supports in addition to safe and affordable housing.

The ability to provide wrap-around services that focus on all aspects of a young person's life - including family, friends and other social relationships, education or employment, mental and physical health - is paramount in providing sustainable and effective supports and reducing homelessness for young people.

Multi-disciplinary approaches within the same team such as education officers, recreation officers, counsellors, psychologists, outreach workers and residential workers have the potential to overcome some of the current service system fragmentation. Collaboration between government agencies and

service providers in a local community is also essential.

A trauma informed approach should also be taken that makes the assumption that young people who have experiences of homelessness have a concentration of complex trauma and uses this as the starting point for service delivery.

It is also important that program requirements are not so restrictive that they prevent young people receiving the help they need. For example, age restrictions that prevent early intervention occurring at an earlier age where appropriate, or restricting services to young people who are receiving Centrelink payments or are without income, can present barriers to effective service delivery.

Canterbury Bankstown Youth Service (CBYS) –

Canterbury Bankstown Youth Service (CBYS) assists young people and young families aged between 16-25 years who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and who are dealing with complex issues.

CBYS provides a range of support services and accommodation options which clients can access in any capacity and at any stage of need. These include prevention and early intervention programs, counselling, education support, crisis accommodation, transitional accommodation, post-crisis support and case management services. The service provides a 24/7 crisis refuge and transitional accommodation.



Implications for policy and practice (cont)

Case study

Megan* was a young person who was born with a hereditary condition that impaired her vision, making her legally blind. Her mother had the same condition. Her stepfather verbally abused her and often told her that 'she couldn't do anything properly' and that she was 'hopeless'. As her living conditions became untenable, she moved away from home and got in touch with Mission Australia's Canterbury Bankstown Youth Service (CBYS).

She was provided with crisis accommodation, counselling to overcome the impact that her step father had on her self-confidence and other supports to navigate the services available to her.

Small milestones such as doing her laundry by herself were celebrated to boost her confidence. Megan was supported to move into transitional accommodation. The staff also supported her to get additional help from Vision Australia and other disability support services equipped to help with her disability. She is a talented musician and has won awards during Youth Week. She plans to pursue a career in music and is determined to be financially independent.

*Client names have been changed to protect their privacy.



Case study

Emmanuel* was 18 years old when he was referred to Mission Australia. He was born in Sierra Leone and after the sudden passing of his parents, his uncle took on the responsibility to raise him and his sister and they moved to Australia when Emmanuel was in the early years of high school. Emmanuel was neglected by his uncle and his basic needs such as adequate food were not met. At 17, Emmanuel felt that he could not stay any longer under his uncle's care.

Mission Australia provided him with crisis accommodation and provided support to stay there until he was ready to move into transitional accommodation where he received support to complete his HSC.

His attempts to apply for university, Centrelink support and many other things were complicated

because he didn't have his birth certificate, and was not sure of his own date of birth. After months of searching and trying, a Mission Australia case manager was able to track it down in Sierra Leone, making him eligible for the things that were previously unavailable to him.

Emmanuel performed well at school and was offered a place in the university degree of his choice: robotics engineering. He's now in his second year of university and was nominated for an academic award last year. He's still in transitional accommodation, but is progressing well towards living independently.

*Client names have been changed to protect their privacy.



Young people at the centre of policy and practice

Harnessing young people's perspectives and insights improves the design, implementation and effectiveness of the programs offered. Young people and their families should be engaged in the design and development of services and programs that are not only evidence-based but also youth-friendly and appealing.⁹³ In particular, there should be meaningful engagement of young people with lived experience of homelessness in the development and implementation of programs that can assist them.

Effective, youth friendly programs to assist young people to overcome a multitude of barriers should also consider individual circumstances and life experiences and tailor the services to meet individual needs. Therefore, it is imperative that the specific support needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people; Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) young people; young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds; young people with disability; and those living in rural, regional and remote areas; are taken into account when designing and delivering these vital services.

"I think that my generation needs to know that we will be able to afford the daily needs and live in a decent house instead of on the street."

F, 16, VIC

"I was being discriminated against by my father. Need a safer environment for people who are LGBTIQ or being abused e.g. refuges, apartments for youth or a high/low security protection facility."

NI, 16, VIC

"There needs to be more funds provided for homeless people to be able to get by - for food, bills etc."

M, 17, WA

"Need more homeless support and less discrimination against them."

F, 16, NSW

"Need to actually make a bigger effort to house the homeless or make more jobs for them to earn their own money and give them a sense of pride that they are doing things themselves."

F, 16, SA

"Stronger early intervention strategies, easier access to services as well as a higher awareness of available services. More services in regional NSW. Centralisation of existing services as many homeless people spend all day walking between services."

F, 19, NSW

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Appendix

Appendix: Total Youth Survey 2017 respondents reporting an experience of homelessness, by state/territory

State/territory	Total no. of respondents who answered homelessness questions	Total no. of respondents who have experienced homelessness	% of respondents who have experienced homelessness
ACT	673	112	16.6%
NSW	6,537	963	14.7%
NT	245*	73*	29.8%*
QLD	4,183	634	15.1%
SA	2,296	414	18.0%
TAS	1,200	208	17.3%
VIC	4,349	556	12.8%
WA	2,319	436	18.8%
National	21,812**	3,397	15.6%

* A relatively small sample size in the NT means this result should be viewed with caution.

** 10 respondents did not indicate their state or territory.



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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 or headspace: 1800 650 890, headspace.org.au