

**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**

youth survey report 2018

From city to country: comparing
major cities and regional areas



Executive Summary

- 28,286 young people aged 15-19 years responded to the *Youth Survey 2018*.
- 17,296 young people were from major cities (56.8% females, 41.6% males).
- 10,037 respondents were living in regional areas (54.4% females, 44.1% males).
- A greater proportion of young people from regional areas than major cities identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (8.9% compared with 3.9%).
- Around twice the proportion of respondents from major cities stated that they were born overseas and spoke a language other than English at home (17.7% and 23.6% compared with 9.8% and 11.5% of young people from regional areas).
- A slightly higher proportion of young people from major cities reported that they were *very satisfied or satisfied* with their studies (69.5% compared with 67.4% of respondents from regional areas).
- A greater proportion of respondents from major cities than regional areas were planning to *go to university* after school (71.3% compared with 58.9%).
- A higher proportion of young people from regional areas indicated intentions to *get an apprenticeship* after finishing school (11.3% compared with 7.6%).
- For young people from major cities and regional areas, the three most commonly cited barriers to finding work were *school responsibilities, lack of skills/experience* and *lack of jobs*.
- For young people from regional areas and major cities, the three most commonly cited barriers to moving out of home were *housing costs (e.g. rent, utilities), financial stability* and *availability of housing*.
- The top three issues of personal concern for young people from major cities were *coping with stress, school or study problems* and *mental health* (44.9%, 35.6% and 31.9%). *Coping with stress* and *school or study problems* were also the top issues of personal concern for young people from regional areas; however, their third most identified concern was *body image* (40.2%, 30.4% and 29.8%).
- The top three issues considered to be the most important in Australia today for young people from both major cities and regional areas were *mental health, alcohol and drugs* and *equity and discrimination*.
- The top three activities for young people in major cities and regional areas were *sports (as a participant), sports (as a spectator)* and *volunteer work*. Young people from regional areas participated in these activities at higher rates than those from major cities.
- The majority of young people from major cities and regional areas felt happy overall with their lives (63.0% compared with 61.7%).
- The majority of young people from both major cities and regional areas felt either *very positive* or *positive* about the future (62.1% compared with 63.1% respectively).

From city to country: comparing major cities and regional areas

Top issues identified in Australia today

Mental health



Alcohol and drugs



Equity and discrimination



28,286

young people took part in Mission Australia's Youth Survey 2018



17,296 were from major cities

10,037 were from regional areas



7 in 10

young people from major cities and regional areas saw **housing costs** as a barrier to moving out of home in the future

1 in 10

 young people from major cities and regional areas reported feeling **negative/very negative** about the future

Double

the proportion of young people from regional areas saw **where you live** as a barrier to finding work



Background

In 2018, a total of 28,286 young people aged 15-19 years responded to Mission Australia's *Youth Survey*. This brief report compares the responses of young people in terms of their location, which was measured by their place of usual residence at the time of completing the survey. Each respondent was grouped according to whether they resided in a major city or a regional area, as determined by the remoteness levels developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (see Appendix).

Demographic profile of respondents

A total of 17,296 respondents were living in major cities (56.8% females, 41.6% males) and a total of 10,037 respondents were living in regional areas (54.4% females, 44.1% males).

A greater proportion of young people from regional areas than major cities identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (8.9% compared with 3.9%).

Around twice the proportion of respondents from major cities stated that they were born overseas and spoke a language other than English at home (17.7% and 23.6% compared with 9.8% and 11.5% of young people from regional areas).

A total of 5.6% of respondents from major cities indicated that they had a disability, while 6.2% of respondents from regional areas reported having a disability.

17,296 respondents to the *Youth Survey 2018* lived in major cities and **10,037** lived in regional areas

Study and training

A marginally higher proportion of respondents from major cities than regional areas indicated that they were studying full-time (94.7% compared with 93.1% respectively).

Respondents who reported that they were currently studying were asked how satisfied they were with their studies. As shown in Table 1, a slightly higher proportion of young people from major cities reported that they were *very satisfied* or *satisfied* with their studies (69.5% compared with 67.4% of respondents from regional areas).

Table 1. Young people's satisfaction with studies

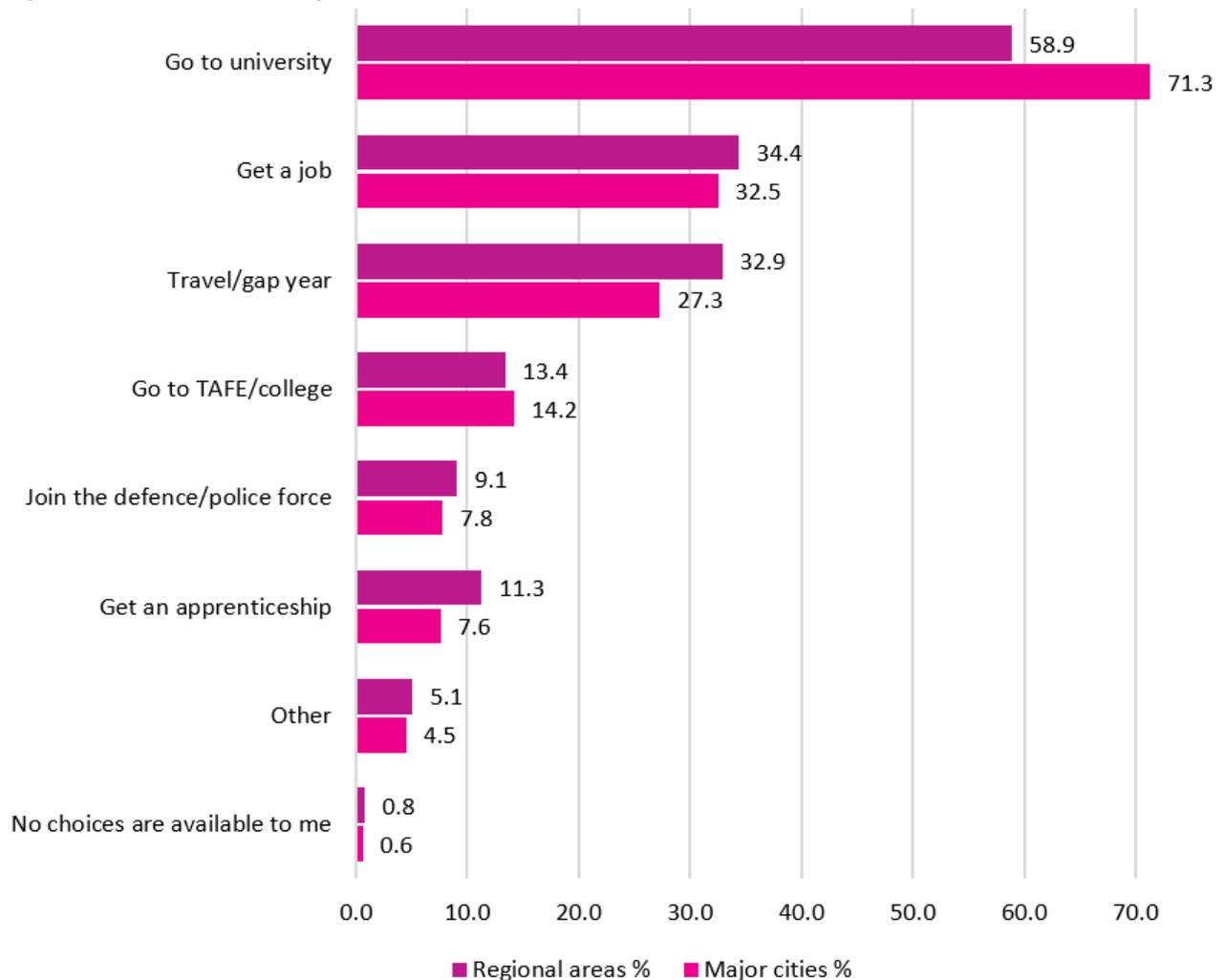
	Major cities %	Regional areas %
Very satisfied	13.6	11.8
Satisfied	55.9	55.6
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	23.5	25.3
Dissatisfied	5.4	5.2
Very dissatisfied	1.6	2.1

Of those that were still at school, 96.9% of young people from major cities stated that they planned to complete Year 12. This was marginally higher than for young people from regional areas (95.3%).

Respondents who were still at school were asked what they planned to do after leaving school. Figure 1 shows that *go to university* was the most frequently chosen option for young people from both major cities and regional areas. However, a greater proportion of respondents from major cities than from regional areas indicated that they planned to do so (71.3% compared with 58.9%).

While similar proportions reported plans to *get a job* (34.4% for regional areas, 32.5% for major cities), greater proportions of young people from regional areas indicated *travel/gap year* plans (32.9% compared with 27.3% for major cities) and intentions to *get an apprenticeship* (11.3% compared with 7.6%).

Figure 1. Plans after leaving school



Respondents were asked how confident they were in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after finishing school. Responses for this question were rated on a 5 point scale from *extremely confident* to *not at all confident*. Nearly half of young people from major cities (49.8%) and regional areas (47.9%) indicated high levels of confidence in their ability to achieve their study/work goals after school. However, close to one in ten young people from both major cities and regional areas were less confident in their ability to achieve their goals: they reported feeling *slightly confident* (7.3% compared with 7.1% respectively) or *not at all confident* (2.7% compared with 2.4% respectively).

Table 2. Confidence in achieving study/work goals

	Major cities %	Regional areas %
Extremely confident	11.3	10.1
Very confident	38.5	37.8
Somewhat confident	40.2	42.5
Slightly confident	7.3	7.1
Not at all confident	2.7	2.4

Employment

Respondents were asked whether they currently have paid work. Table 3 shows participation in paid employment among respondents from major cities and regional areas. A higher proportion of young people from regional areas reported working part-time (48.3% compared with 39.3% of young people living in major cities). Conversely, a higher proportion of young people from major cities were not currently in paid employment (60.2% compared with 50.2% for regional areas).

Table 3. Participation in paid employment

	Major cities %	Regional areas %
Employed full-time	0.6	0.9
Employed part-time	39.3	48.3
Not in paid employment, looking for work	36.1	32.1
Not in paid employment, NOT looking for work	24.1	18.7

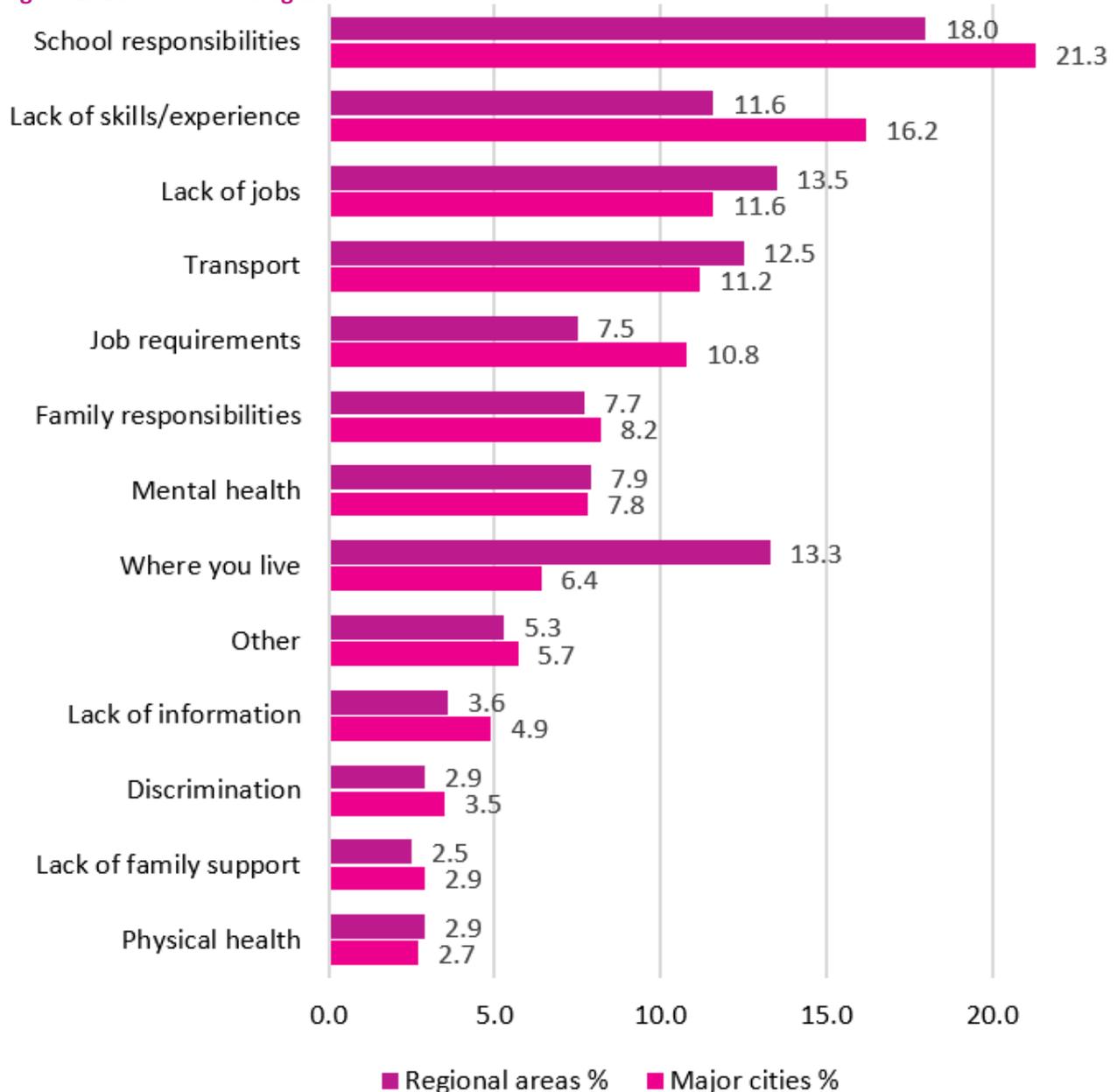
Barriers to finding work

For the first time in 2018, young people were asked whether they felt there are any barriers which impact upon them finding work. Close to four in ten young people from major cities and regional areas indicated the presence of barriers (39.0% and 37.9% respectively).

Respondents who indicated the presence of barriers were asked to indicate from a number of items the barrier/s that were preventing them from finding work. For young people from major cities and regional areas, the three most commonly cited barriers to them finding work were *school responsibilities*, *lack of skills/experience* and *lack of jobs* (21.3%, 16.2% and 11.6% compared with 18.0%, 11.6% and 13.5%).

- More than twice the proportion of young people from regional areas cited *where you live* as a barrier to finding work (13.3% compared with 6.4% for major cities).
- Around one in eight young people from regional areas indicated *transport* as a barrier to finding work (12.5% compared with 11.2% for major cities).

Figure 2. Barriers to finding work



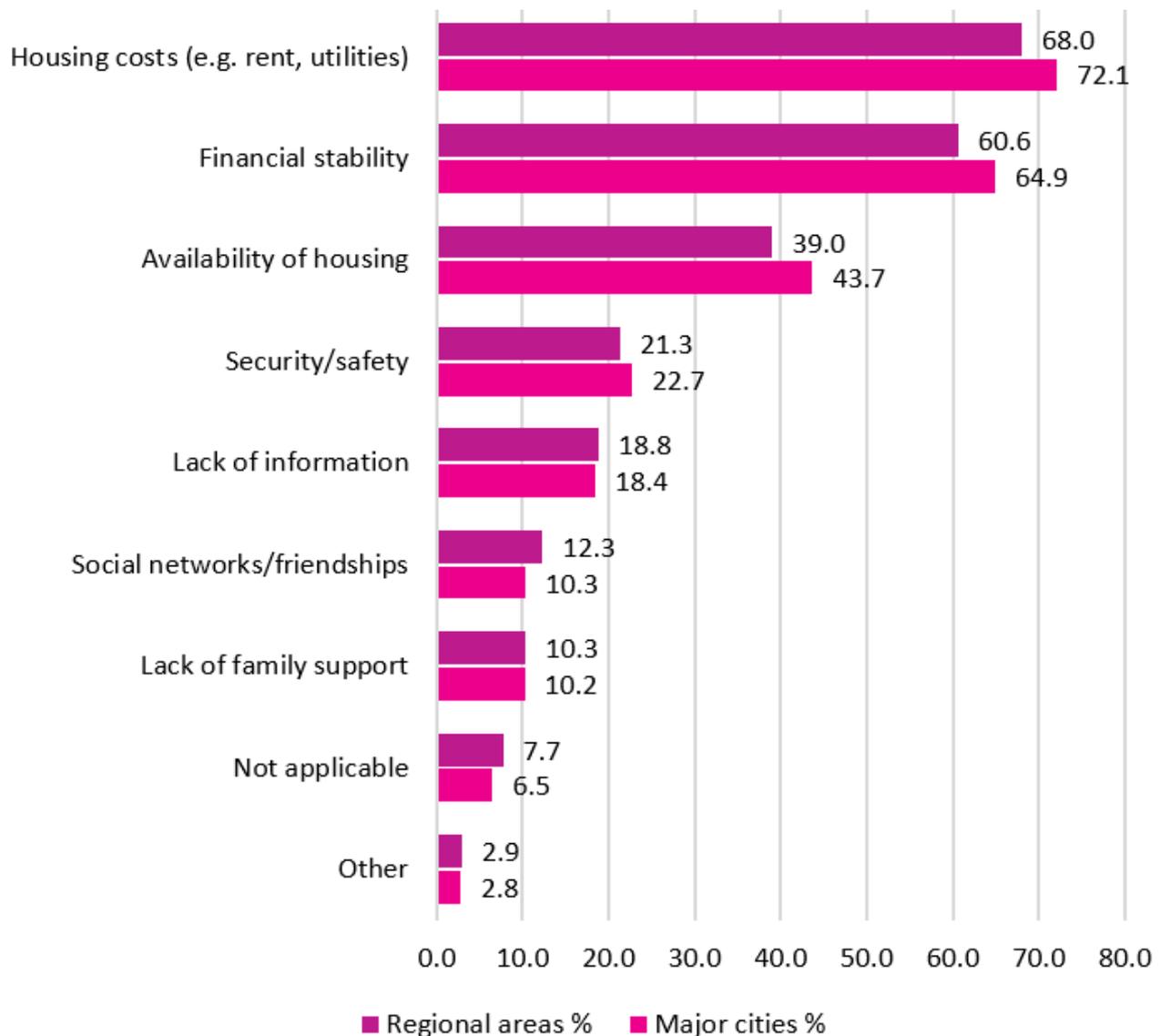
Barriers to moving out of home

For the first time in 2018, young people were asked whether they felt there were any barriers which may impact upon them moving out of home in the future.

For young people from both major cities and regional areas, the three most commonly cited barriers to moving out of home were *housing costs (e.g. rent, utilities)*, *financial stability* and *availability of housing*.

The proportion of respondents from major cities who cited the presence of these barriers was generally higher than the proportion of respondents from regional areas (72.1%, 64.9% and 43.7% compared with 68.0%, 60.6% and 39.0%).

Figure 3. Barriers to moving out of home

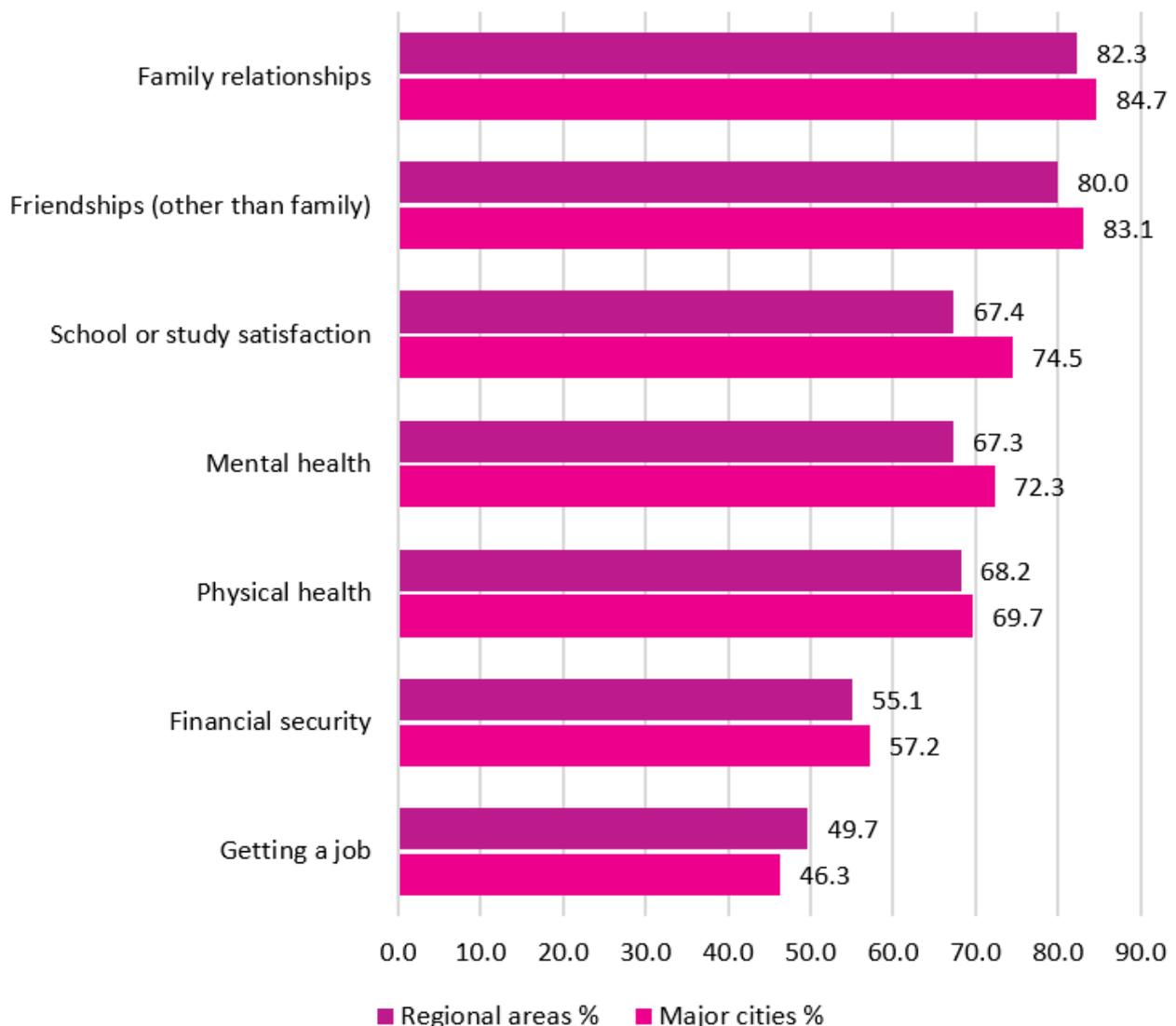


What do young people value?

Young people were again asked how much they valued *family relationships, financial security, friendships (other than family), getting a job, mental health, physical health and school or study satisfaction*.

- The three most highly valued items among respondents from major cities were *family relationships, friendships (other than family)* and *school or study satisfaction* (84.7%, 83.1% and 74.5%).
- *Family relationships, friendships (other than family)* and *physical health* ranked as the three most highly valued items for young people from regional areas (82.3%, 80.0% and 68.2%).

Figure 4. What young people value



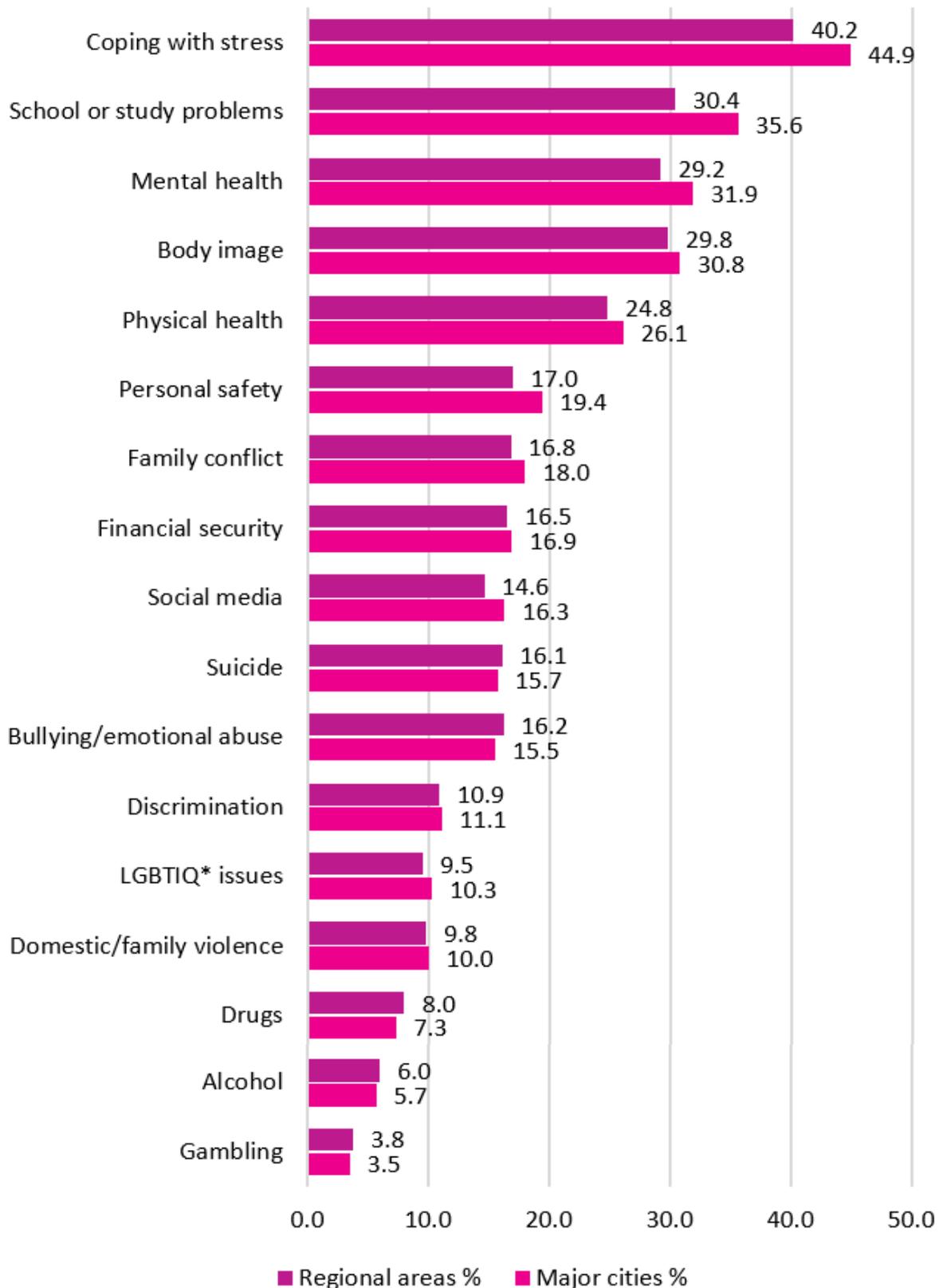
Note: Items were ranked according to the summed responses for *extremely important* and *very important* for each item.

What issues are of personal concern to young people?

Respondents were asked to indicate how personally concerned they were about a number of issues. Responses were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from *extremely concerned* to *not at all concerned*. The items were ranked according to the summed responses for *extremely concerned* and *very concerned* for each item.

- The top three issues of personal concern for young people from major cities were *coping with stress, school or study problems* and *mental health* (44.9%, 35.6% and 31.9%).
- The top three issues of personal concern for young people from regional areas were *coping with stress, school or study problems* and *body image* (40.2%, 30.4% and 29.8%).
- Around one quarter of young people from major cities (26.1%) and regional areas (24.8%) indicated concern around *physical health*.
- Higher proportions of young people from major cities were concerned about *coping with stress* (44.9% compared with 40.2% for regional areas), *school or study problems* (35.6% compared with 30.4%), *mental health* (31.9% compared with 29.2%) and *personal safety* (19.4% compared with 17.0%).

Figure 5. Issues of personal concern to young people



Note: Items were ranked according to the summed responses for *extremely important* and *very important* for each item.

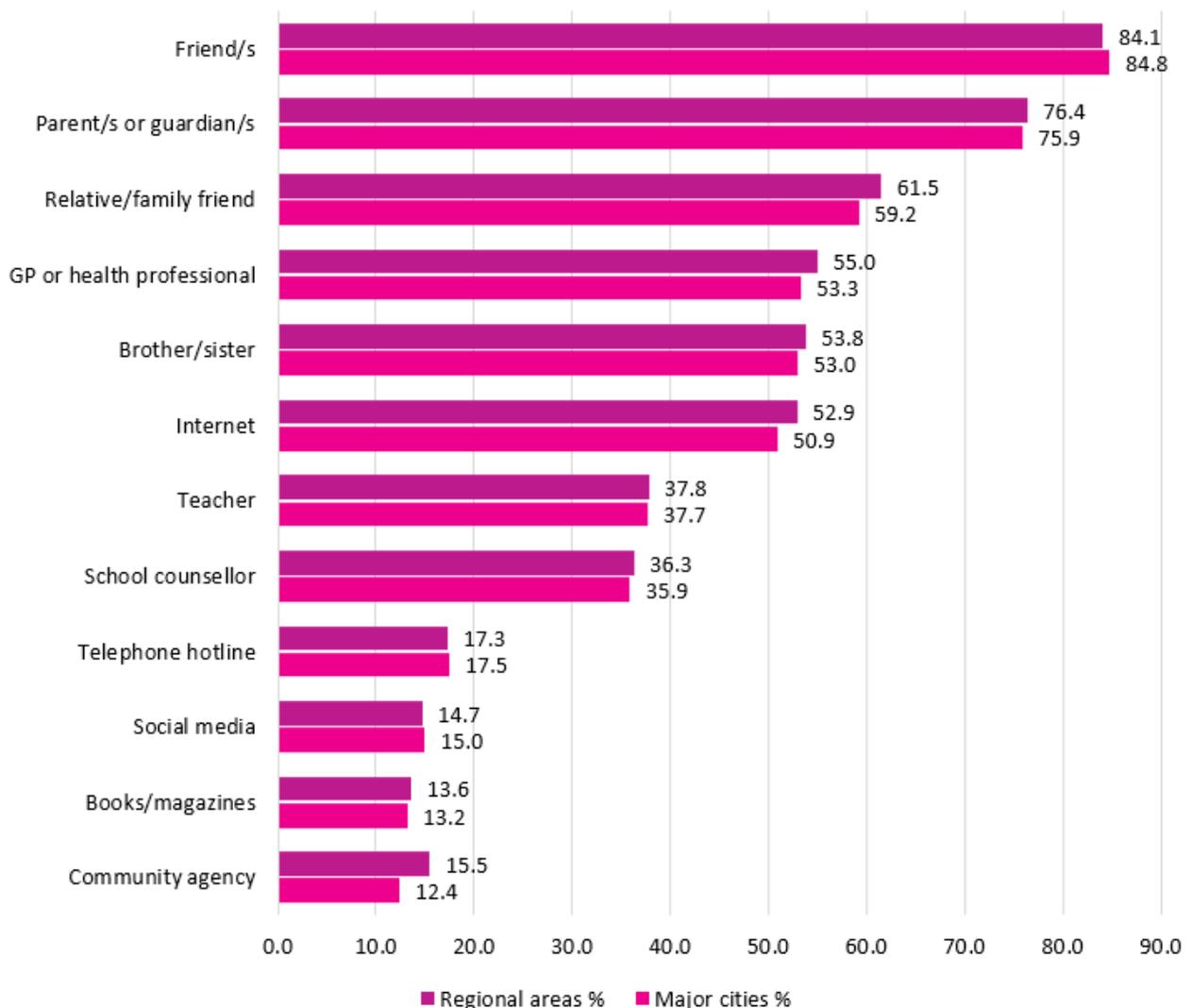
*Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer (LGBTIQ) issues.

Where do young people go for help with important issues?

Young people were asked to indicate from a number of sources where they would go for help with important issues in their lives. Figure 6 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated that they would go to the particular source for support.

The top three sources of help for young people living in major cities and regional areas were their *friend/s*, *parent/s or guardian/s* and *relative/family friend* (84.8%, 75.9% and 59.2% compared with 84.1%, 76.4% and 61.5% respectively). Overall results were generally consistent across both cohorts.

Figure 6. Where young people go for help with important issues



Note: Respondents were able to choose more than one option.

For the first time in 2018, young people were asked if they had used the internet for help with important issues in their lives and to indicate which sources of support they had accessed from a list of services/sources.

As indicated in Table 4, nearly one third of young people from major cities had accessed the internet for *information about specific issues* (32.6%), compared to just under three in ten young people from regional areas (28.8%). Around one in five young people from both major cities and regional areas indicated using an *online quiz or assessment tool* (19.8% compared with 18.1% respectively). The third most indicated online source used for support for respondents from major cities was accessing *personal stories or testimonies* (18.5%), while the third source of online support for young people from regional areas was to *chat one-on-one with someone who has had a similar experience* (16.2%).

Table 4. Internet use for important issues

	Major cities %	Regional areas %
Information about specific issues	32.6	28.8
Online quiz or assessment tool	19.8	18.1
Personal stories or testimonies	18.5	15.8
Chat one-on-one with someone who has had a similar experience	16.6	16.2
Information about available services	17.2	15.6
Counselling with a professional	12.1	11.4
Support group or forum	8.8	7.6
Other	7.6	7.9
Online course or program	5.2	5.4

How well do young people feel their family gets along?

Young people were asked how well they felt their family gets along with one another. Responses to this question were rated on a 5 point scale, ranging from *excellent* to *poor*. As shown in Table 5, similar proportions of respondents from major cities and regional areas rated their family's ability to get along very positively.

- Around six in ten young people from major cities (61.9%) and regional areas (59.9%) indicated their family's ability to get along was *excellent* or *very good*.
- Almost one in five young people from regional areas (19.1%) rated their family's ability to get along as either *fair* or *poor* (compared to around one in six from major cities: 17.2%).

Table 5. Family's ability to get along

	Major cities %	Regional areas %
Excellent	29.3	28.0
Very good	32.6	31.9
Good	20.9	21.0
Fair	10.9	12.4
Poor	6.3	6.7

What issues do young people think are the most important in Australia today?

Young people were asked to list the three issues they considered were the most important in Australia today. The information provided was categorised and listed in order of frequency in Table 6.

The top three issues identified by young people living in both major cities and regional areas were *mental health, alcohol and drugs* and *equity and discrimination*.

Slightly higher proportions of respondents from major cities identified *equity and discrimination* (20.3% compared with 17.6% for regional areas) and *homelessness/housing* (8.1% compared with 6.6%) as important issues facing Australia today. Conversely, a slightly greater proportion of young people from regional areas saw *the environment* as a key issue (8.7% compared with 6.8% of respondents from major cities).

Table 6. Most important issue in Australia today

	Major cities %	Regional areas %
Mental health	35.9	34.8
Alcohol and drugs	23.2	24.4
Equity and discrimination	20.3	17.6
Bullying	14.1	14.7
Crime, safety and violence	11.6	10.4
The economy and financial matters	9.7	9.3
Health	9.1	10.0
Homelessness/housing	8.1	6.6
Education	7.1	5.9
The environment	6.8	8.7

What activities are young people involved in?

Young people were asked to identify the activities that they have been involved in over the past year from the list of options shown in Table 7.

- The top two activities for young people aged 15 to 19 years in both major cities and regional areas were *sports (as a participant)* and *sports (as a spectator)*.
- Slightly higher proportions of young people from regional areas than major cities reported participating in *sports (as a participant)* (65.7% compared with 62.6%), *sports (as a spectator)* (43.2% compared with 39.9%) and *volunteer work* (38.2% compared with 36.6%).
- A higher proportion of young people from major cities took part in *arts/cultural/music activities* (37.6% compared with 34.5% for regional areas), *youth groups and activities* (23.9% compared with 20.5%) and *religious groups/activities* (21.7% compared with 14.1%).

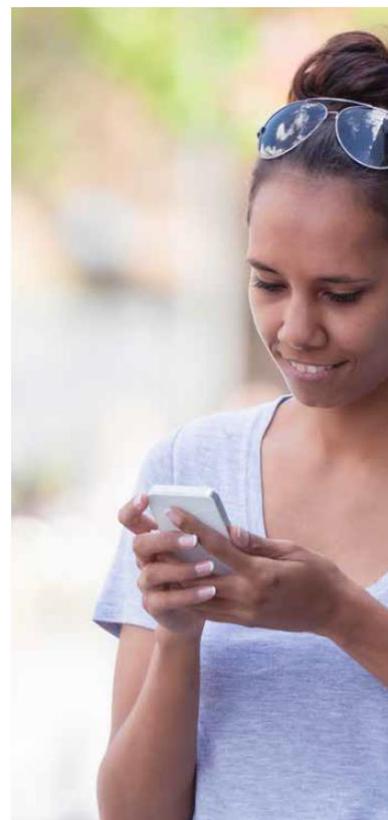


Table 7. Activities young people were involved in over the past year

	Major cities %	Regional areas %
Sports (as a participant)	62.6	65.7
Sports (as a spectator)	39.9	43.2
Volunteer work	36.6	38.2
Arts/cultural/music activities	37.6	34.5
Student leadership activities	27.2	28.5
Youth groups and activities	23.9	20.5
Religious groups/activities	21.7	14.1
Environmental groups/activities	10.5	12.4
Political groups/organisations	4.1	3.9

How happy are young people and how do they feel about the future?

Young people were asked to rate how happy they were with their life as a whole on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 indicates feeling the happiest. Responses were standardised on a scale of 0 to 100. For reporting purposes, responses have been categorised into three groupings: 70-100 indicates *happy/very happy*, 40-60 specifies *not happy or sad*, and 0-30 designates *very sad/sad*. As shown in Table 8, the majority of young people from major cities and regional areas felt happy overall with their lives (63.0% compared with 61.7%).

Table 8. How happy young people are

	Major cities %	Regional areas %
Happy/Very happy (70-100)	63.0	61.7
Not happy or sad (40-60)	27.3	28.2
Very sad/Sad (0-30)	9.9	10.1

Young people were asked how positive they felt about the future and to rate their response on a 5 point scale from *very positive* to *very negative*. Table 9 shows that the majority of young people from both major cities and regional areas felt either *very positive* or *positive* about the future.

- Over six in ten young people from both major cities (62.1%) and regional areas (63.1%) felt either *very positive* or *positive* about the future.
- Around three in ten young people from major cities (28.0%) and regional areas (27.2%) felt *neither positive nor negative* about the future.
- Around one in ten respondents from both major cities and regional areas reported feeling *negative* or *very negative* about the future (7.0% and 3.0% compared with 6.4% and 3.3%).

Table 9. Feelings about the future

	Major cities %	Regional areas %
Very positive	15.3	16.1
Positive	46.8	47.0
Neither positive nor negative	28.0	27.2
Negative	7.0	6.4
Very negative	3.0	3.3

Appendix

The data categorisation for major cities/regional areas used in this report was defined via the Australian Bureau of Statistics Australian Statistical Geographical Standard (ASGS) for Remoteness Areas. The 'major cities' classification employed in this report aligns with the 'Major Cities of Australia' remoteness area, while the 'regional areas' classification is derived from the combined total of the 'Inner Regional Australia', 'Outer Regional Australia', 'Remote Australia' and 'Very Remote Australia' remoteness areas. The capital cities of Darwin and Hobart have been classified under 'Inner Regional Australia' as per the remoteness area classification for these regions. Respondents to Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2018* were classified into these remoteness areas according to the postcode provided when completing the survey.

The comparisons between postcode data and the ABS ASGS remoteness areas utilised the geographical correspondences tool made available by the ABS for 2012 postcode regions and 2011 remoteness areas. Correspondences are a method for reassigning data from one geographical region to another. Although correspondences are not always exact (e.g. a postcode region may be split into different remoteness areas if the boundary for a remoteness area crosses that postcode region), converting smaller geographic units to larger units usually results in a relatively more accurate data conversion than when converting larger units to smaller areas or between areas of similar size. As postcode regions are smaller than remoteness areas, relative to each level of remoteness, correspondences utilised within this report are relatively exact. The correspondence tables used in this report can be accessed at:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1270.0.55.006July%202011?OpenDocument>

Policy recommendations

- Expand programs to support young people to re-engage with education and provide resources to prepare young people for future work;
- Provide evidence-based universal mental health prevention and intervention programs in schools;
- Increase Youth Allowance and rent assistance payments and boost investment in affordable and appropriate accommodation for young people; and
- Expand online and face-to-face services and resources for young people and their support networks including family and friends.

“I need to study hard but I struggle to find information about the career I want and what skills I need for it. Living in a rural town makes it difficult to get education opportunities and leadership.”

(F, 17, VIC)

“More support in country areas around people getting support. More workers in mental health.”

(F, 17, SA)

“More job options for youth in rural areas. Businesses that will hire youth to work for them.”

(F, 15, QLD)

Who is Mission Australia?

Mission Australia is a non-denominational Christian community service organisation, with more than 155 years of experience in standing together with Australians in need on their journey to independence.

Our evidence-based, client-centred services are focused on reducing homelessness and strengthening communities across Australia. Our services are tailored to the needs and preferences of the clients and communities we serve. Our programs range from early intervention to intensive wrap-around services. They include services targeting homelessness; providing integrated family support; parenting programs; early childhood education; mental health services; residential drug and alcohol programs; youth programs; access to safe and secure housing; and programs to build capacity, resilience and opportunity for local communities.

We work in partnership with others to achieve our goal. This includes communities, supporters, government, businesses and other organisations. We measure our impact, collecting evidence of what works to inform our service design and delivery, and to advocate for change.

We stand together with Australians in need until they can stand for themselves.

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