Impacts of COVID-19 on young people in Western Australia

Feedback from the YACWA
COVID-19 Youth Survey

yacwa
.ORG.AU

ABOUT YACWA

The Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA) is the peak non-government youth organisation in Western Australia.

We operate primarily as a human rights organisation that seeks to address the exclusion of young people in a rapidly changing society.

Survey Overview

The aim of the survey was to gain an insight into the impact that COVID-19 has had on young people in Western Australia.

Over the past couple of weeks YACWA has been engaged with a number of key-decision making bodies responding to COVID-19 and we have been using ongoing feedback from the survey to make sure that our advocacy is representative of your views.

We have also shared the feedback with youth services to assist them in providing vital support to vulnerable young people in the community.
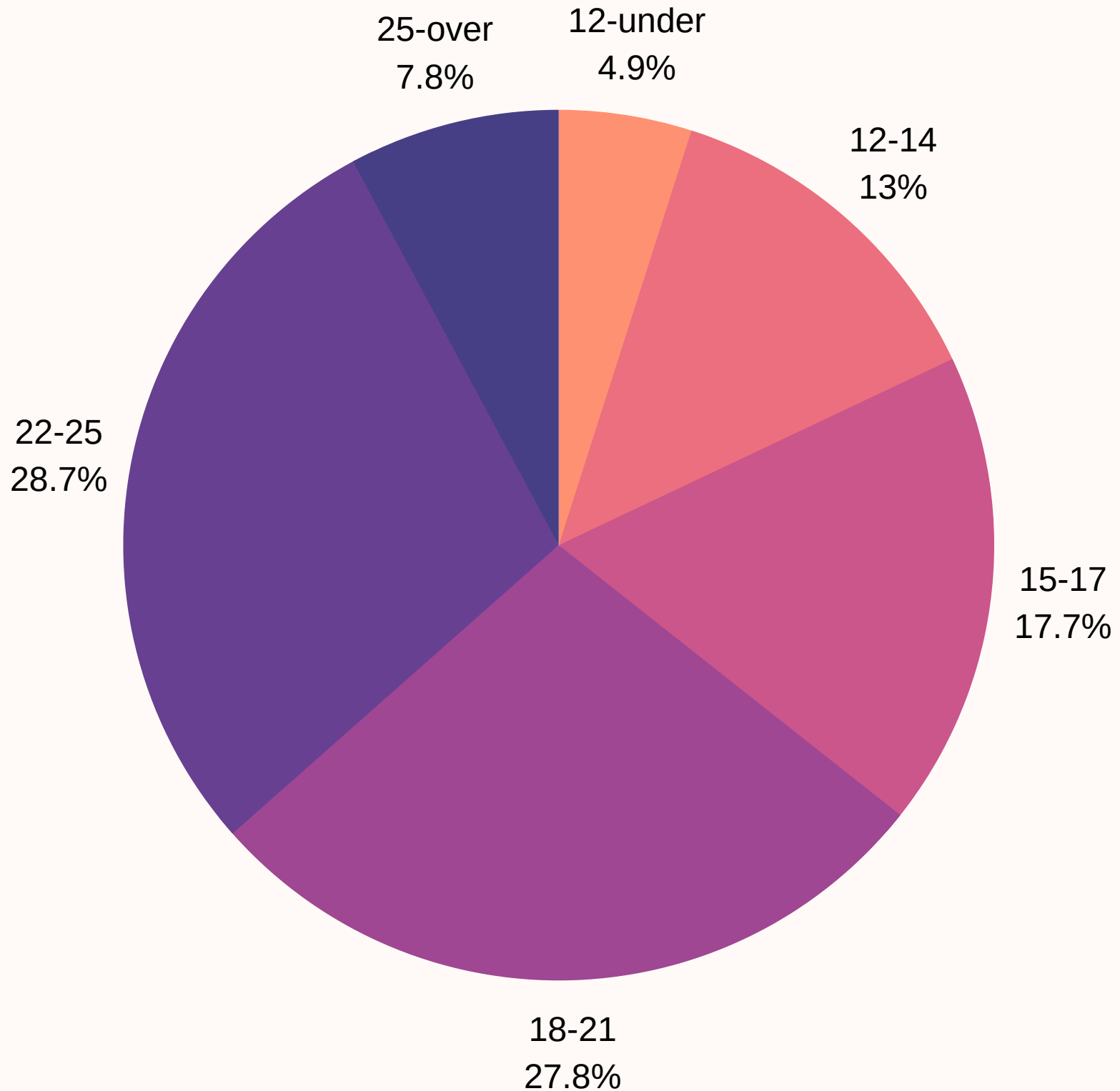
yacwa
.ORG.AU

Key Learnings

Feedback from the survey canvassed a range of issues affected by COVID-19 such as health/mental health, employment, education, access to COVID-19 information and welfare support. Key learnings included:
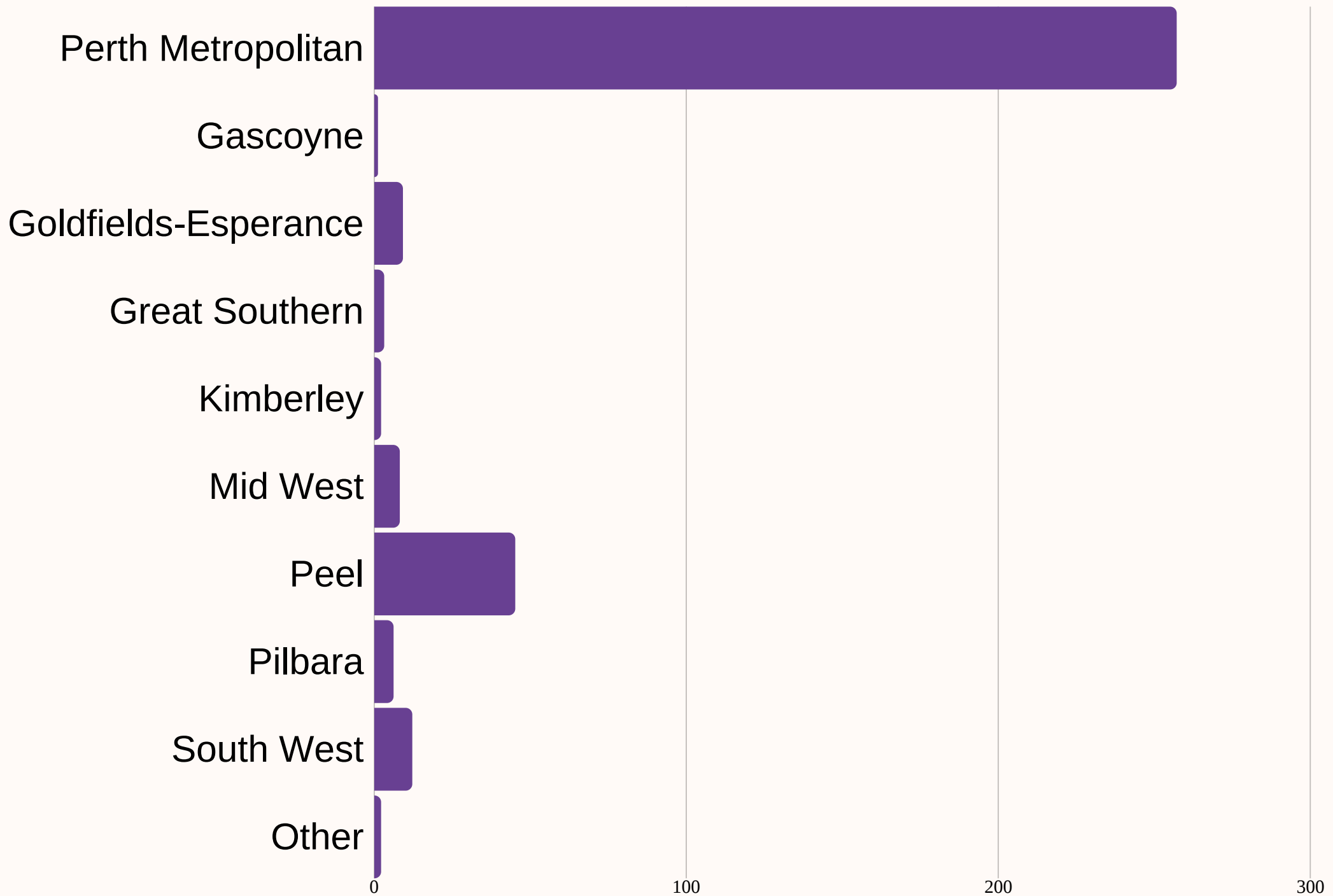
- The loss of social interaction is a primary concern for a majority of young people which has resulted in significant increases in mental health issues.

- Young people are disproportionately affected by COVID-19 related job losses and many have had difficulties in engaging with Centrelink and accessing welfare support.

- Shifts in education due to COVID-19 have been extremely difficult for many young people, with inconsistencies in social distancing for some and insufficient support to transition to online learning for others impacting on their educational experience.

yacwa
.ORG.AU

Age

(Total Respondents – 345)

25-over
7.8%

12-under
4.9%

12-14
13%

22-25
28.7%

15-17
17.7%

18-21
27.8%

yacwa
.ORG.AU

Regional Responses

Region	
Perth Metropolitan	(~255)
Gascoyne	
Goldfields-Esperance	
Great Southern	
Kimberley	
Mid West	
Peel	
Pilbara	
South West	
Other	

X-axis: 0, 100, 200, 300

Top COVID-19 Concerns

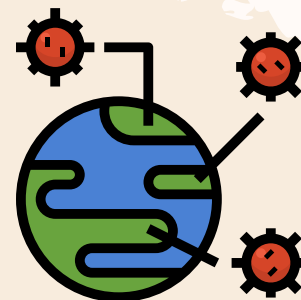**78%** The health of family and friends

67% My financial and employment situation

48% Global spread of COVID-19

78% The global economy and job market
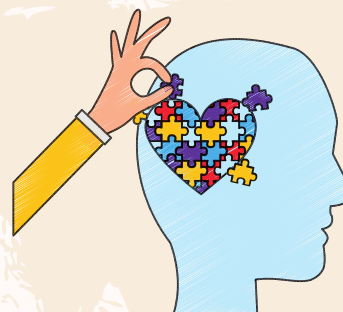
88% My health and mental health

yacwa
.ORG.AU

The Impact of COVID-19

Basic Necessities

38%
Unable to buy essential supplies

19%
Unable to buy essential medicine

"We don't have enough money because my Mum has to have food delivered and it costs a lot for delivery"

"Not being able to buy necessities, toilet paper, soap and hand sanitizer has made me extremely anxious"

Mental Health

"I miss my friends, & not being able to work has been really hard"

"It has become very difficult to access (mental health) services therefore harder to obtain medication for my mental health"

91%
of respondents have experienced significant or some impact on their mental health and stress levels

"I have been mentally impacted by feeling like I am over-reacting by social distancing when others are not"

"counselling appointment are less helpful over the phone. It's difficult for me to find safe and private places to take the calls due to my family situation"

"I have enforced precautions despite the significant decline in my mental wellbeing"

yacwa
.ORG.AU

Employment

44% have experienced a loss of income

" I don't know when my next shift will be and for how long that shift will be if I do get one"

"My partner's hours have been cut by half as a one wage income home so it's had a huge impact on us"

"Officially, I'm stood down. They said that if the store still exist by the end of this then I have a job, but I'm worried the store will die"
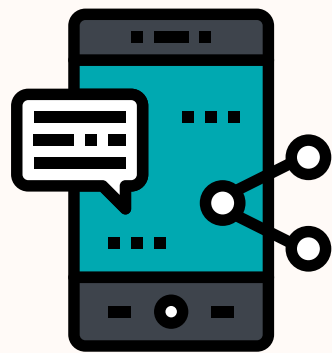
32% are unable to work in existing employment

"My employer does not care about employee mental health during these times"

Experiences with Accessing Welfare Support

"I am not old enough to access any services, I am 15. My work sent an email saying I was excluded from any job seeker as I am under 16, even though I usually work steady hours each week"

"There has been slow response times and not enough information and support documents available online"

"The response time has been very slow. Someone else registered the same time as me and they got a call within a week whereas I waited 3 weeks. Sometimes the information is a bit confusing and I wish it was written in a clearer way"

yacwa
.ORG.AU

Education, Housing and Other Experiences

Studying year 12 ATAR at home is extremely difficult. The website where my work is located is extremely slow and my wifi is also slow"

"Everyone I live with have lost hours and we were already struggling to begin with so it's been fairly impacted."

"COVID-19 has made it harder to access alternative housing options when mine is currently not suitable"

"My landlord has attempted to raise rent making my financial situation harder"

yacwa
.ORG.AU

How can youth services better engage and support young people to deal with the impacts of COVID-19?
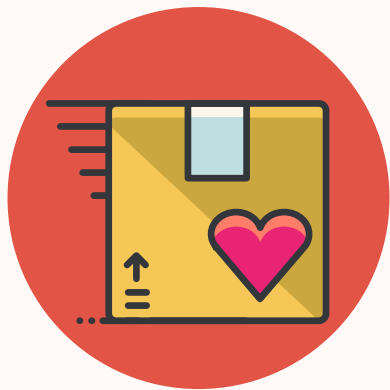
Develop youth mental health 'care packages' to give to young people in need.

Host online drop-in groups where young people can virtually hang out and engage in activities and crafts.

Refine and refocus your programs based on ongoing feedback from young people.

Support young people with financial literacy and how to budget for every day life.

Engage in social media campaigns advertising available support services.

Use inclusive language and signage when advertising your service to show that you are accessible

yacwa
.ORG.AU

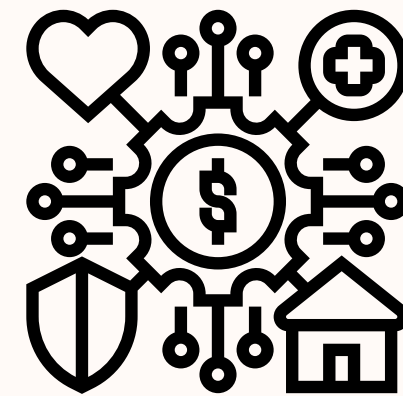# What can Governments do to support young people with the impacts of COVID-19?

Health & Mental Health
Fund more cost-free/subsidised mental health services for young people

Employment/Welfare
Ensure increases in welfare support are maintained long-term to support young people with COVID-19 Recovery

Education
Supply free ICT equipment courses for young people in need so they can start/complete their education.

Housing
Provide more social and affordable housing options for vulnerable young people

yacwa
.ORG.AU