

3. Draft *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* – Endorsement for Public Consultation

SF/1269

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PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents for consideration the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026*.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* (refer **Appendix 1**) is to develop a vision and a four-year strategic plan that responds to the key needs of young people aged between 12-25 years of age who live, study, work and recreate in Benalla Rural City.

It will be used to guide Benalla Rural City Council's activities and resource allocation in the municipal youth sector over the next four years.

DISCUSSION

Widespread community consultation was undertaken to inform the development of a 'whole of community' Youth Strategy that will consider the needs and aspirations of young people aged 12-24 who live, work or study in the municipality.

The draft *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* has strongly relied on input from youth and the wider community and was developed in close collaboration with young people, secondary schools, parents, community members and related services and agencies that plan for and support youth.

The Strategy has been designed to reflect feedback from young people and the broader community. The Strategy is succinct, to the point and employs language that is accessible to young people. To achieve the goal to create a concise youth strategy key supporting information and statistics are provided within a consultation report for the strategy (refer **Appendix 2**).

The draft *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* has three themes with each theme having its own set of objectives. The three themes are:

- Evolve
- Strengthen
- Reconnect.

The Strategy will be supported by an annual Action Plan detailing the opportunities and associated measurable activity Council will deliver for our young people over the next four years. Annual plans will be able to adapt and respond to changing needs, trends and issues.

COUNCIL PLAN 2021-2025 IMPLICATIONS

Community

- *A Healthy, safe and resilient community.*
- *A connected, involved and inclusive community.*

Economy

- *Diverse education and employment.*

Leadership

- *Engaged and informed community.*

GENDER EQUALITY ACT

Under the *Gender Equality Act 2020* the Council is required to undertake a gender impact assessment when developing or reviewing any policy, program or service that has a direct and significant impact on the public.

A gender equity assessment found the Strategy has an overall positive gender impact.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Once adopted, costs associated with implementation of the *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* will be accommodated within existing budget allocations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In accordance with the Council's *Community Engagement Policy*, it is recommended that the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* be placed on public exhibition for at least 28 days with formal submissions called for to be considered by the Council.

It is proposed that, due to the high level of consultation that has already occurred to develop the Strategy, that community engagement be undertaken at the 'consult' level under the International Association for Public Participation's IAP2 public participation spectrum as detailed in the table below:

Level of Public Participation	Promise to the community	Techniques to be used
Consult	We will provide information and consider feedback prior to making a decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draft strategy presented in a public report to the Council. ▪ Public Notice in the <i>Benalla Ensign</i> and on Council website. ▪ Draft strategy promoted on Council's website and social media channels. ▪ Draft strategy distributed to local youth networks for feedback. ▪ Public comment invited via social media. ▪ Submissions heard and considered by the Council.

Community consultation on the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* will open Thursday 14 April 2022 and close 5pm Friday 20 May 2022.

OFFICER DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No officers involved in the preparation of this report have any general or material conflicts of interest in this matter.

CONCLUSION

Submissions relating to the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* will be heard at the Finance and Operations Committee on 15 June 2022.

Recommendation:

That the Finance and Operations Committee, acting under its delegated authority of the Council, resolve:

- 1. That the draft *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* be endorsed for public exhibition.**
- 2. That the *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* be placed on public exhibition for a period of at least 28 days.**

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Draft

YOUTH STRATEGY

2022-2026



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We, the Benalla Rural City Council, acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land.
We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and to Elders from other communities.

Young People are vital to our community. Their contribution is critical to creating a vibrant, viable and progressive rural city in the short, medium and long term.

The 2022-2026 Youth Strategy is a dynamic, evolving plan that recognises the invaluable ideas, energy and aspirations of our young people.

This strategy outlines Benalla Rural City's commitment to young people, outlining what Council will do and how Council will work with young people, schools, workplaces, parents, service providers and other levels of government.

This document will be supported by an annual Action Plan detailing the opportunities and associated measurable activity Council will deliver for our young people over the next four years. The Plans will have the ability to adapt and respond to changing needs, trends and issues.

Our Commitment

Young people are at the forefront of this Strategy to ensure they are leading and championing youth activities, events and programs.

This will be achieved by:

- giving young people a space to have their voices heard
- providing safe, inclusive and respectful spaces for young people to interact
- enabling young people to lead committees, crews and groups
- ensuring young people's wellbeing is at the centre of all decision making
- establishing committees, crews and groups built on equitable opportunities
- ensuring youth services and organisations work alongside one another to provide the best opportunities for young people
- creating platforms for all young people to be given the chance to engage in events, activities and programs.

Themes

The Youth Strategy is made up of three key themes, as identified by young people – paths to **evolve**, opportunities to **strengthen** and a chance to **connect**.

How our Youth Strategy was created





THEME 1

EVOLVE

“Allow for our voices to be heard and provide opportunities for personal and professional growth.”

Young people will be:

1.1	Provided a lead role in organising youth activities, events and programs.
1.2	Provided opportunities to lead healthy and active lives.
1.3	Encouraged and presented with opportunities to understand and explore youth enterprise.
1.4	Given a voice to advocate for the delivery of relevant education and training that meets the needs of our local community.
1.5	Engaged in the design of key locations across Benalla Rural City to ensure they have safe spaces to socialise, hold events and study.
1.6	Supported to attain their probationary drivers licence.

Quotes from youth survey

“I like being safe and knowing that there are people around me to help if I need it”

“I like the space, the quietness, the closeness of the community members.”

“Transport into town from just out of Benalla, not many activities for my age group.”





THEME 2

STRENGTHEN

“Teens can sometimes go through anxiety and everyone’s body is changing and we need something to keep us happy and healthy.”

Young people call for:

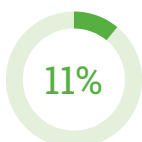
2.1	Greater community understanding of respectful relationships, gender equity and safe behaviours.
2.2	Increased community awareness about the diversity of educational pathways
2.3	Strengthened and enhanced skills to advocate for matters of importance to them
2.4	Increased training, employment, work experience and volunteering opportunities
2.5	An improved understanding and interest in the impacts of COVID-19 on them and increased support throughout the recovery process

Quotes from youth survey

“Have more social opportunities, festivals, movie nights, night life and places we can dance.”

“Friendly community and sporting opportunities.”

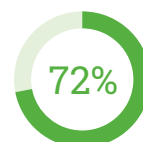
“I enjoy the peace, and the lake with the walking track is great for exercise and relaxing.”



of young people
identify as
LGBTQIA+



of young people
have casual
employment



of young people are
currently attending
high school



THEME 3

CONNECT

"I would offer more programs and youth events that teenagers and young people enjoy, so that they can make friends from different places that share the same interests. This in turn would make it easier for kids that don't find it easy to make friends."

Our community will:

3.1	Celebrate the accomplishments of young people in our community.
3.2	Investigate and advocate for improved public transportation options.
3.3	Ensure youth organisations, services and schools have a shared focus and key goals across the Benalla youth sector.
3.4	Recognise the need for LGBTQIA+ young people to feel supported and empowered within the Benalla Rural City community.
3.5	Create opportunities for young people to engage with a wide range of activities and events including arts, culture, music, festivals, social and recreational activities.
3.6	Improve access to youth focused health and wellbeing services that target key issues for young people in Benalla, such as; mental health, drugs and alcohol, body image, housing and family violence.
3.7	Be a safe place to live, where young people's diversity and culture is respected and celebrated.

Quotes from youth survey

"Have more facilities for young people to interact and be active."

"It's a tight community. Everybody kind of knows each other. The people are welcoming and polite, it's a beautiful looking place with nice scenery."

"Lack of opportunities, lack of connection from the residential areas to the central township."

The top three concerns for young people are:

1

boredom/
nothing to do

2

body
image

3

mental health
problems

A detailed consultation report is available upon request.



@BenallaYouth



#YouthBenalla



Benalla Rural City Council
Youth Strategy Consultation Results

Introduction

Benalla Rural City Council has undertaken widespread community consultation to inform the development of a 'whole of community' Youth Strategy that will consider the needs and aspirations of young people aged 12-24 who live, work or study in the municipality.

The *Benalla Rural City Youth Strategy 2022-2026* has strongly relied on input from youth and the wider community and was developed in close collaboration with young people, secondary schools, parents, community members and related services and agencies that plan for and support youth.

Young people have been the major contributors in shaping the 2022-2026 Youth Strategy. 'Youth Researchers' were also supported to guide the development of the Youth Strategy through survey design and promotion.

Planning and engagement for the Strategy began in 2018 when Council engaged a consultant, Lisa McCoy, to begin research for an updated Youth Strategy. The consultation process to inform the new strategy occurred during 2018, 2019 and 2021.

The Strategy was in its final stages of development in early 2020 when COVID-19 struck. The impact of COVID across our community was significant. Young people had to endure several challenges including remote learning, cancellation of sport and hobbies, and an end to in-person contact with their friends. The decision was made to delay the Youth Strategy to enable Council to deliver a strategy that was reflective of the current situation that young people found themselves in.

The Youth Team conducted a new survey and undertook further consultation with young people to understand the changes in young people's priorities and to test the data that had been collected pre-COVID-19. Although some face-to-face consultation was able to take place the majority of consultation during this period occurred online due to pandemic restrictions.

This consultation report is a combination of the work undertaken by consultant Lisa McCoy and Council staff.

Strategy Implementation – Annual Action Plans

The themes and objectives identified within the *Benalla Rural City Council Youth Strategy 2022-2026* will guide the development of annual Action Plans over the next four years. The Action Plans will detail the activities and resources required to meet strategy objectives and provide an opportunity for Council staff to regularly review and update key actions to reflect the needs of young people.

Consultation Methodology

Young people, parents, schools, service providers and community members were invited to share their input into the development of the *Benalla Rural City Youth Strategy*.

The 2018 and 2021 consultations engaged over 900 people who shared their thoughts and ideas; the breakdown of the community engagement was:

- 648 young people aged 12-24 filled in an online survey
- 150+ young people attended a focus group
- 85 service providers/community members completed an online survey
- 14 parents/community members attended a focus group
- 18 service providers attended a focus group

In addition, young people assisted with the research through designing the youth survey and focus group questions and promoting the survey to their peers.

Comparing 2018 and 2021

The 2018 and 2021 results were compared to identify any changes in the three years with particular note of the ongoing effects of COVID-19, the biggest changes observed in the surveys were the concerns identified by young people.

2018 Top 5 Concerns

1. Boredom/nothing to do
2. Body image
3. Mental Health Problems
4. Suicide
5. Pressures of school work

2021 Top 5 Concerns

1. Boredom/nothing to do
2. Body image
3. Mental Health Problems
4. Aftermath of COVID-19
5. Future career choices

In 2018 the concern 'future career choices' was the 20th concern for young people at the time. Other concerns that saw a noticeable change in importance for young people include:

Racism	2018 - 27 th concern	2021 - 12 th concern
Eating disorders	2018 - 36 th concern	2021 - 17 th concern
Homophobia	2018 - 34 th concern	2021 - 23 rd concern
Cost of activities	2018 - 6 th concern	2021 - 27 th concern

The concerns of young people are predicted to change over the next four years with the annual action plans allowing the change in concerns to be addressed.

Summary of 2018 – 2019 Survey Findings – 405 responses

A summary of the consultation results is included below. More detailed data and information can be found in the subsequent sections of this report.

What do young people like the most about where they live?

Young people told us that the top five things they liked most about where they live were:

1. The peace and quiet where they live
2. The friendly people in their community
3. The small country town feel
4. The ease of making friends and that their friends are close by
5. The wide-open spaces

What did young people not like about where they live?

The top six things that young people did not like about where they lived were:

1. Boredom- lack of things to do for young people, especially at night and on weekends
2. Isolation- being geographically isolated
3. Lack of variety of shopping locally
4. Drug use in the town
5. Lack of transport with social, education and work impacts mentioned most
6. Bullying- young people were most concerned about online bullying however physical and verbal bullying were also of concern

Young people's employment/work history:

- 39% of young people who completed a survey were engaged in casual or part time work
- 8% of young people who completed a survey were working full time
- 15% of young people who were working age and completed a survey were unemployed
- More females (44%) than males were engaged in part time or casual work
- Almost double the number of males (19%) were seeking work compare to females (10%)
- An equal number of male and female respondents were unemployed (15%)

What activities are young people participating in?

The top six activities that survey respondents participate in were:

1. Sports (68%)
2. Physical activity (49%)
3. Gaming (29%)
4. Music (25%)
5. Reading (23%); and
6. Volunteer work (22%).

What activities and events are young people interested in attending?

An overwhelming 80% of young people who filled in a survey said that they would like to see more activities and events for young people in the Benalla Rural City.

The top five activities and events that young people who filled in a survey would be interested in attending were:

1. Benalla Festival (68%)
2. Benalla Show (67%)
3. Movie nights (61%)
4. Live music events (58%); and
5. Youth festivals (43%).

What issues are of concern to young people?

The top ten issues of concern for young people who filled in a survey were:

1. Boredom/nothing to do (48%)
2. Body image (41%)
3. Mental health problems (40%)
4. Suicide (39%)
5. Pressures of school work (31%)
6. Cost of activities/recreation (31%)
7. Fitting in (30%)
8. Friendship problems (29%)
9. Online bullying (28%)
10. Peer pressure (27%)

Young people participating in focus groups mirrored these concerns. Parents and community members who completed a survey or attended a focus group expressed similar concerns around mental health and boredom and also rated alcohol and drug misuse, unemployment, engagement in education and access to services and supports as concerns they notice.

What do young people think is needed in the Benalla Rural City to support better outcomes for young people?

Young people told us that they wanted:

1. More activities and events for young people (31%)
2. Improved supports/outcomes for young people (16%)
3. Infrastructure (14%)
4. Youth Space/centre (11%)
5. Improved safety/image (10%)
6. Better shopping (6%)
7. Improved education, career and job opportunities (6%)
8. Improved transport (6%)

Parents/community members/service providers echoed the above suggestions from young people and also added:

- Improved service coordination for young people with complex needs
- Strengthened partnerships/collaboration between schools, services and the community
- Improved access to local, affordable study options
- More youth led projects/activities/events
- Increased family support for young people and their families; and
- Enhanced bullying support/programs.

What Young People Said

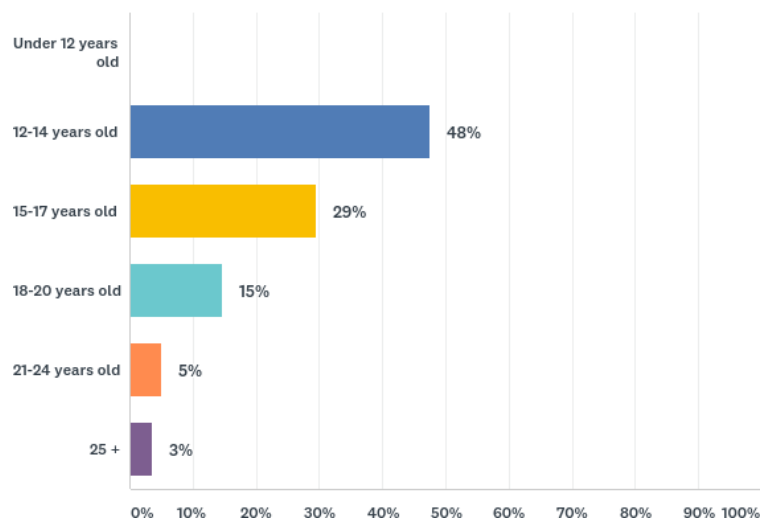
Young people across the Benalla Rural City were invited to share their input into the Youth Strategy by filling in an online Youth Survey or attending a focus group. A total of 405 young people filled in an online survey and 139 young people shared their thoughts and ideas at a focused discussion group.

The online youth survey was promoted through schools and social media, and focus groups were held with the following groups:

- Student Leadership Group Benalla P-12
- Hands on Learning Group Benalla P-12
- Edspace senior students
- Benalla Flexible Learning Centre
- CVGT
- Benalla Leo's Group
- Benalla P-12 year 7 and 8 students

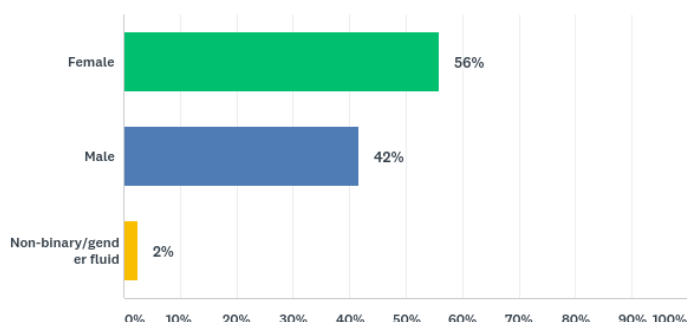
Benalla Rural City Youth Survey Results 2019

Q1 How old are you?



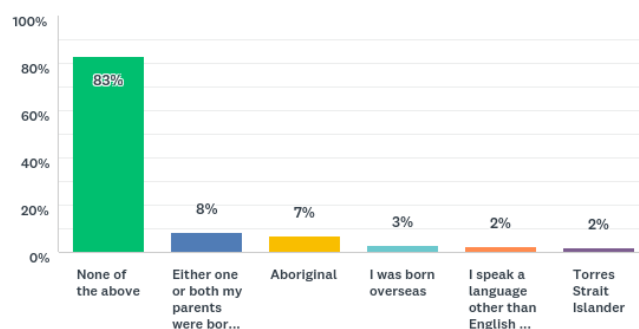
A wide range of ages were reflected by survey respondents: 12-14 years of age (48%), 15-17 years of age (29%), 18-20 years of age (15%), 21-24 years of age (5%) and the remaining 3% was aged 25 and over.

Q2 Which of the following best describes your current gender identity?



There were slightly more female respondents (56%) than male (42%) and the remaining 2% of survey respondents identified as non-binary/gender fluid.

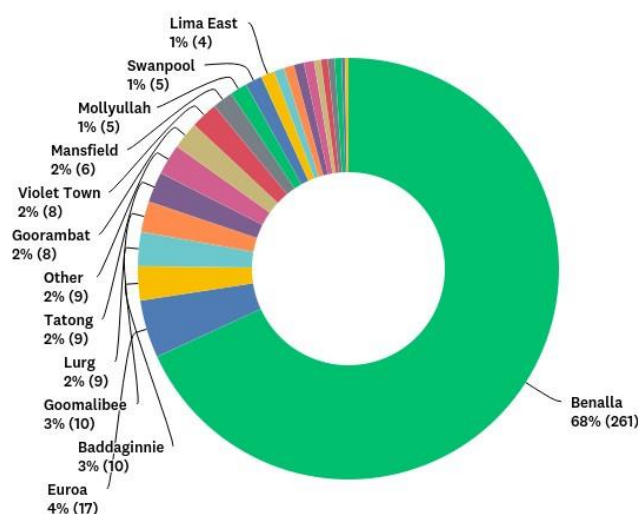
Q3 What is your cultural background? (tick all that apply)



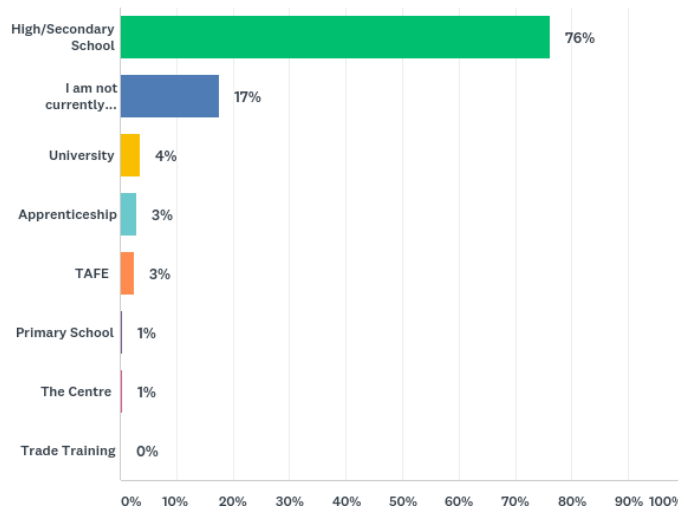
Respondents shared their range of cultural backgrounds: 8% of respondents had one or both parents born overseas, 9% identified as being from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, 3% of respondents were born overseas and 2% of respondents spoke a language other than English in their home.

Survey respondents came from a wide range of communities within and surrounding the Benalla Rural City. The majority of survey respondents lived in Benalla (68%) whilst the remaining 32% of respondents lived in outlying towns within the Benalla Rural City or a nearby surrounding community. Many of these young people living outside the Benalla Rural City study, work or socialise in Benalla.

Q4 Where do you live?



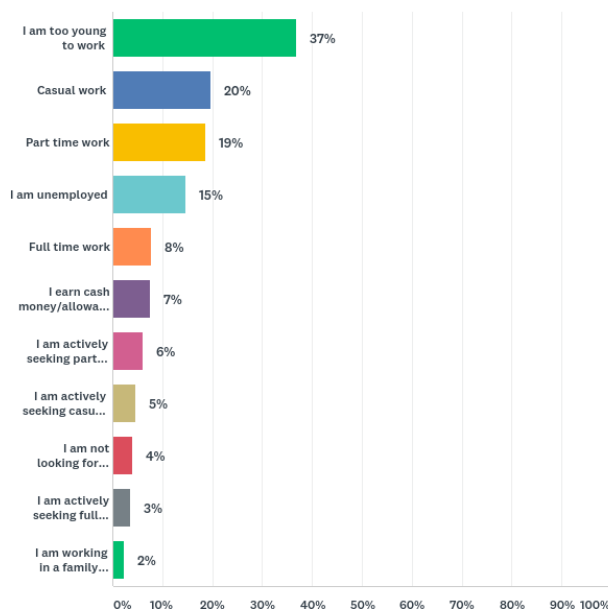
Q5 Are you currently studying? (tick all that apply)



76% of survey respondents were attending secondary school, 17% were not currently engaged in study, 4% were attending University, 3% were engaged in an apprenticeship, 3% were attending TAFE and the remaining 2% were in primary school or studying at The Centre.

Of respondents that were old enough to work the majority were engaged in either casual work (20%) or part time work (19%), 8% of young people who filled in a survey were working full-time, 7% earn cash money/allowance working for family and 2% work for family in an unpaid capacity. 15% of survey respondents shared that they were unemployed. Of those that were not employed 6%

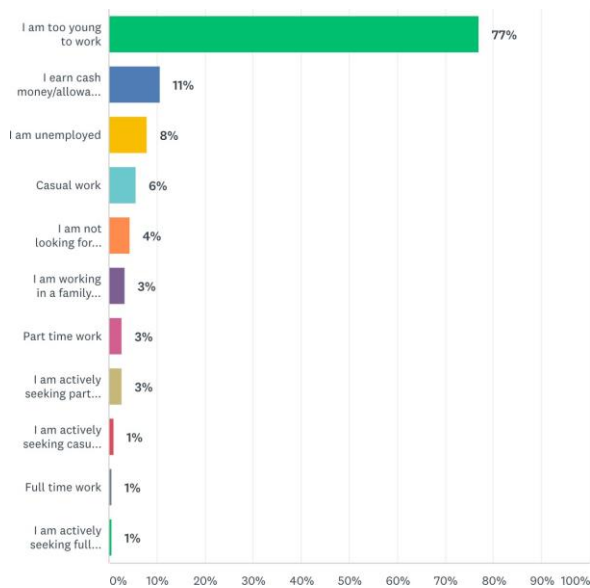
Q6 My employment/Work History (tick all that apply)



were actively seeking part time work, 5% were seeking casual work, 3% were seeking full time work and 4% were not actively seeking employment.

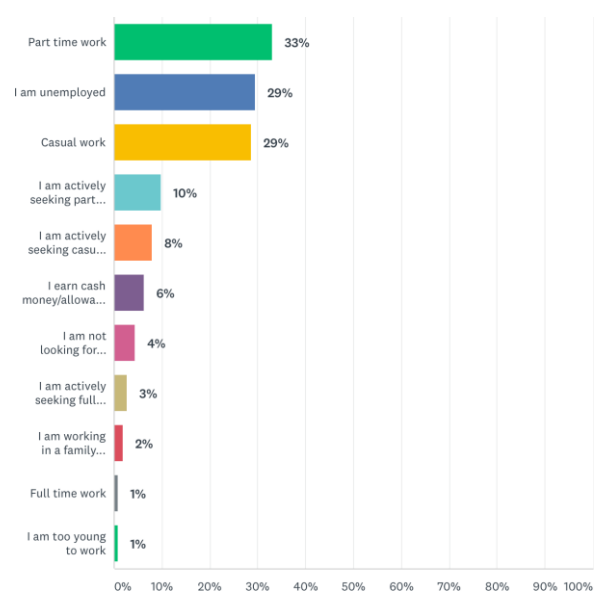
Employment/work history by age group

12-14 age group



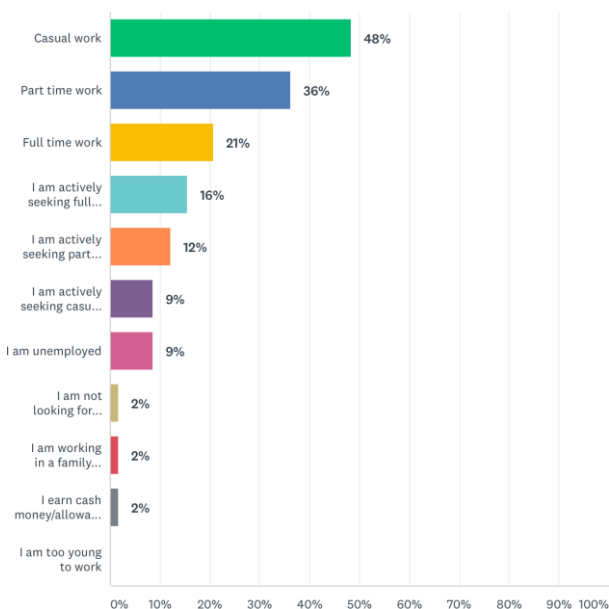
- 9% of respondents aged 12-14 were working either part time or casually
- 3% of 12-14 year olds were working in an unpaid capacity in a family business

15-17 age group



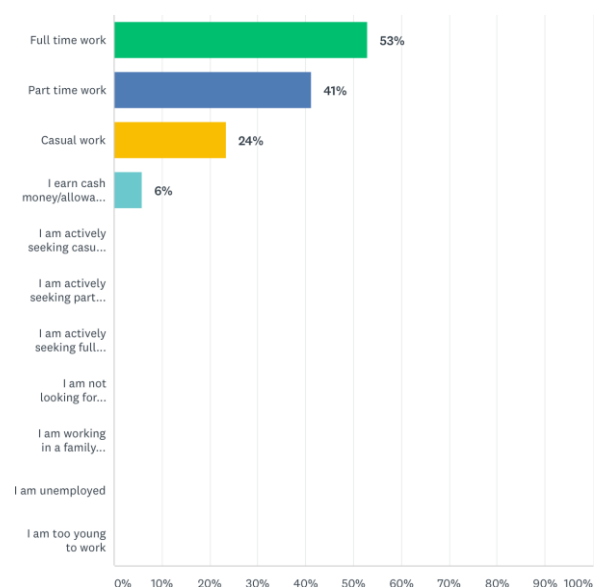
- over half of 15-17 year olds were working in part-time or full time work
- 29% of respondents aged 15-17 were unemployed
- a combined 21% of 15-17 year olds were seeking part-time, casual or full time work

18-20 age group



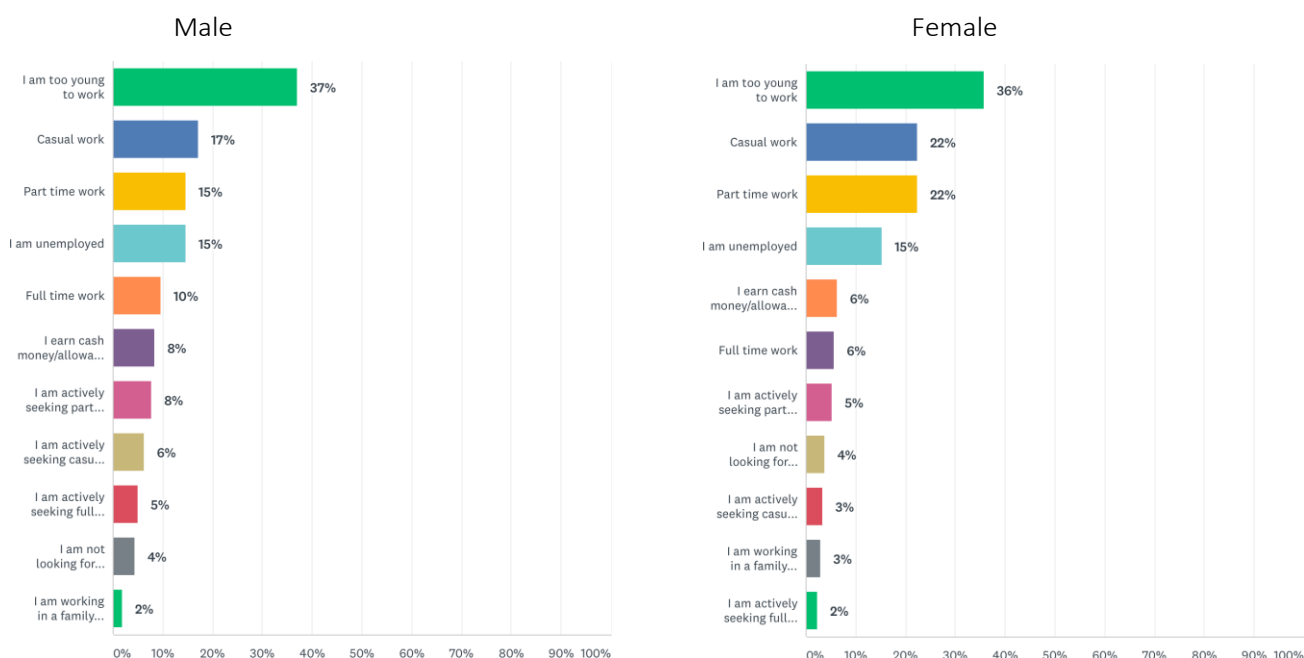
- Almost half (48%) of 18-20 year old respondents were engaged in casual work
- 36% of 18-20 year olds were working part time
- 21% 18-20 year olds were working full time
- 16% of this age group were seeking full time work and 21% were seeking part time or casual work
- 9% of respondents in the 18-20 year old age group were unemployed

21-24 age group

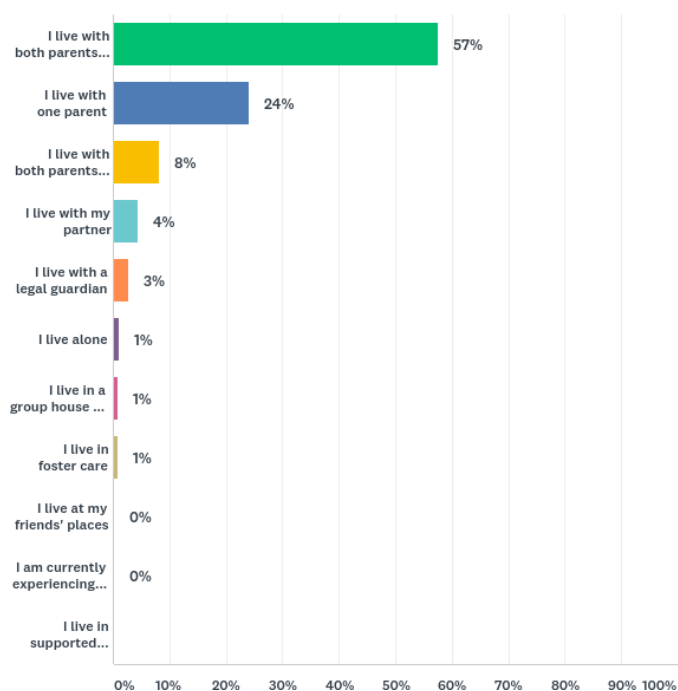


- Over half (53%) of respondents aged 21-24 were working full time
- 41% of 21-24 year olds were working part time and 24% were working casual

Employment/work history by gender



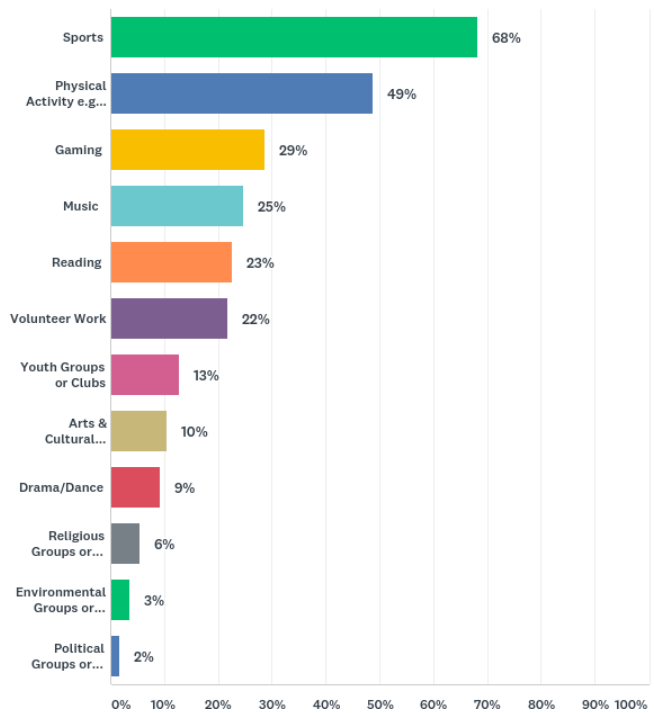
Q7 What are your current living arrangements?



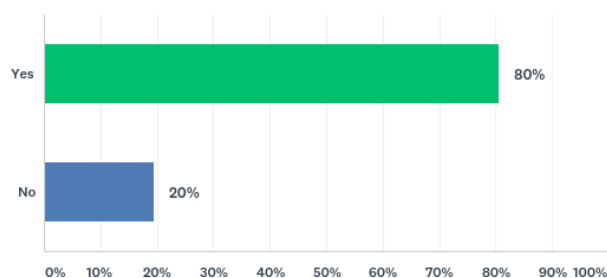
57% of survey respondents lived with both parents in the same home, 24% lived with one parent, 8% lived with both parents in two separate households, 4% live with a partner, 3% reside with a legal guardian and the remaining 3% live alone, in a group/shared house or in foster care.

The top six activities that survey respondents participate in are: sports (68%), physical activity (49%), gaming (29%), music (25%), reading (23%) and volunteer work (22%).

Q8 What activities do you participate in? (tick all that apply)

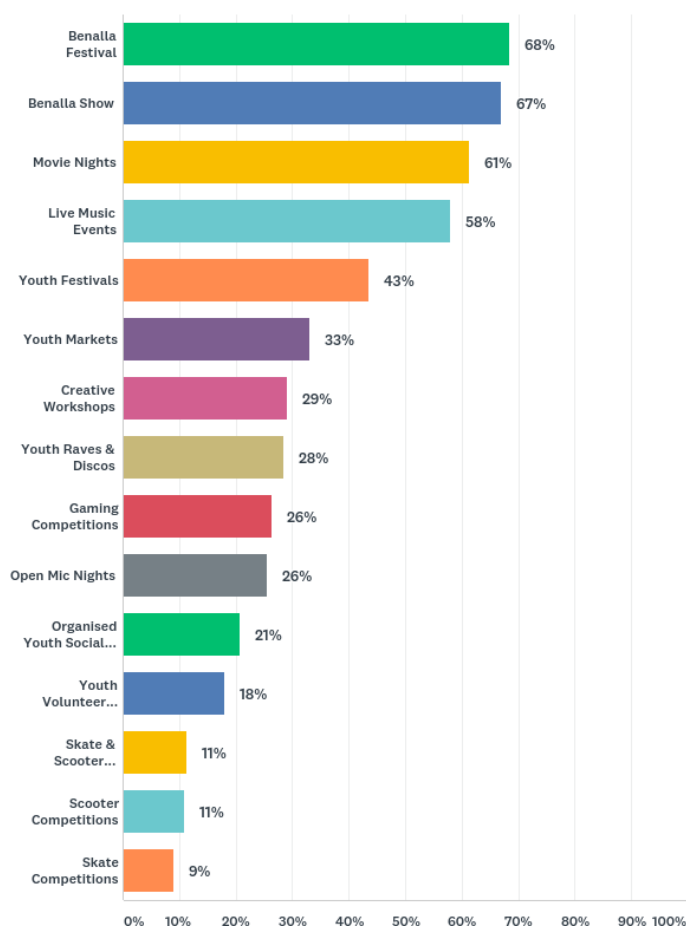


Q9 Would you like to see more activities and events for young people in Benalla Rural City?



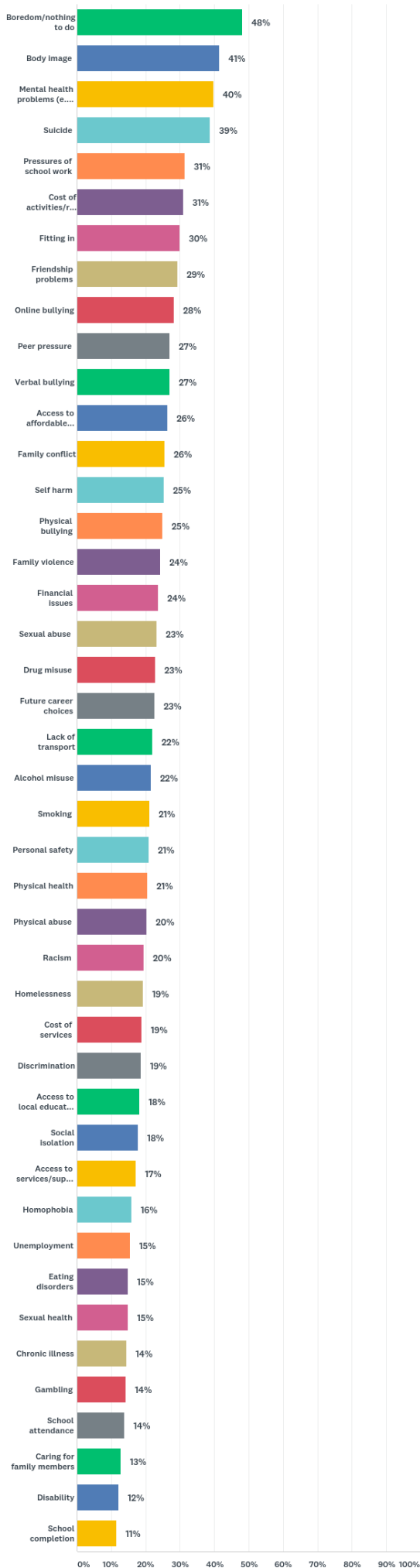
The overwhelming majority of survey respondents (80%) wanted to see more activities and events for young people, the remaining 20% did not want any more activities and events for young people in Benalla Rural City.

Q10 What activities and events would you be interested in attending? (tick all that apply)



The top five activities and events that young people who filled in a survey would be interested in attending are: Benalla Festival (68%), Benalla Show (67%), movie nights (61%), live music events (58%) and youth festivals (43%).

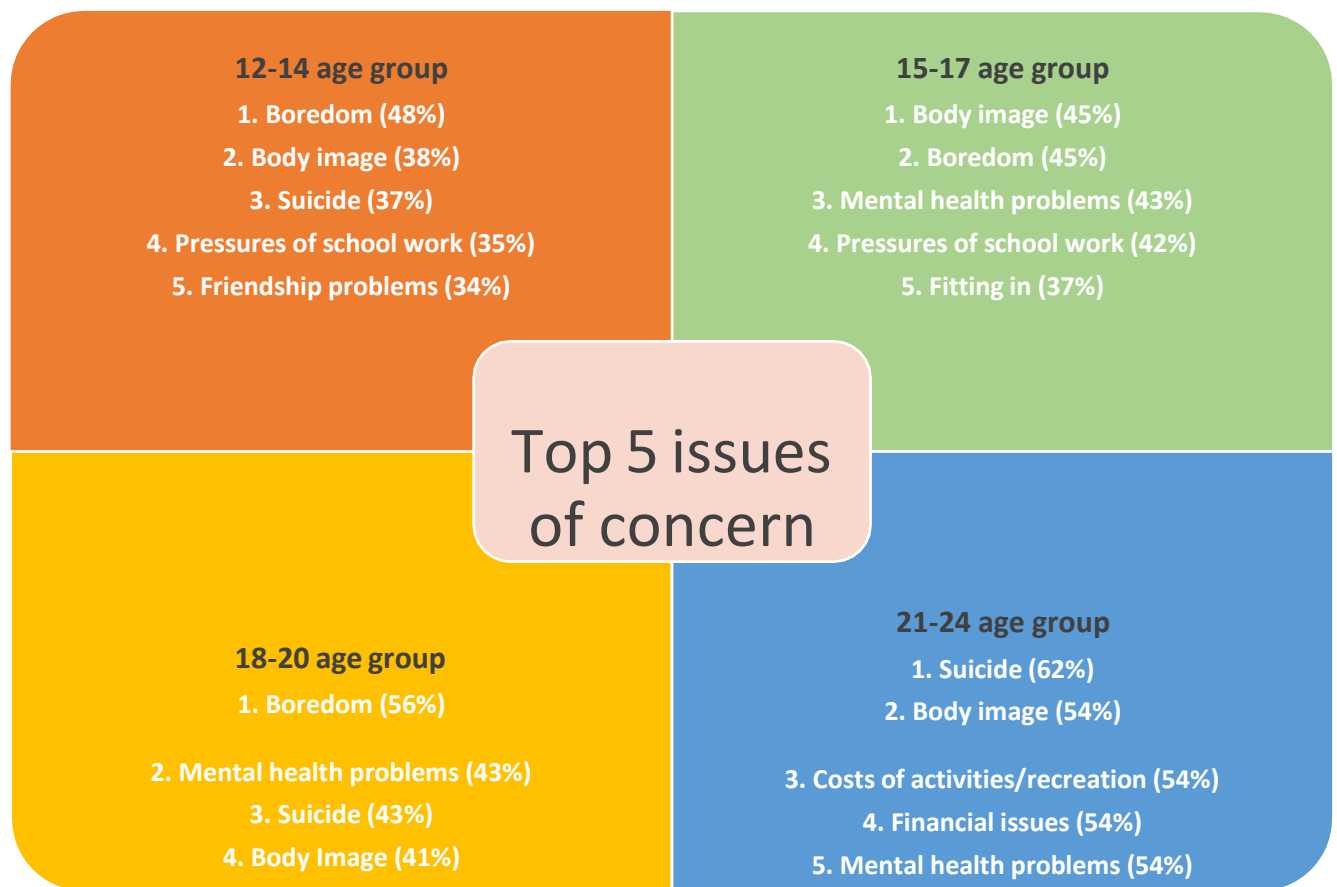
Q11 What issues are of concern to you? (tick all that apply)



The top ten issues of concern for all survey respondents in 2018 were:

1. Boredom/nothing to do (48%)
2. Body image (41%)
3. Mental health problems (40%)
4. Suicide (39%)
5. Pressures of school work (31%)
6. Cost of activities/recreation (31%)
7. Fitting in (30%)
8. Friendship problems (29%)
9. Online bullying (28%)
10. Peer pressure (27%)

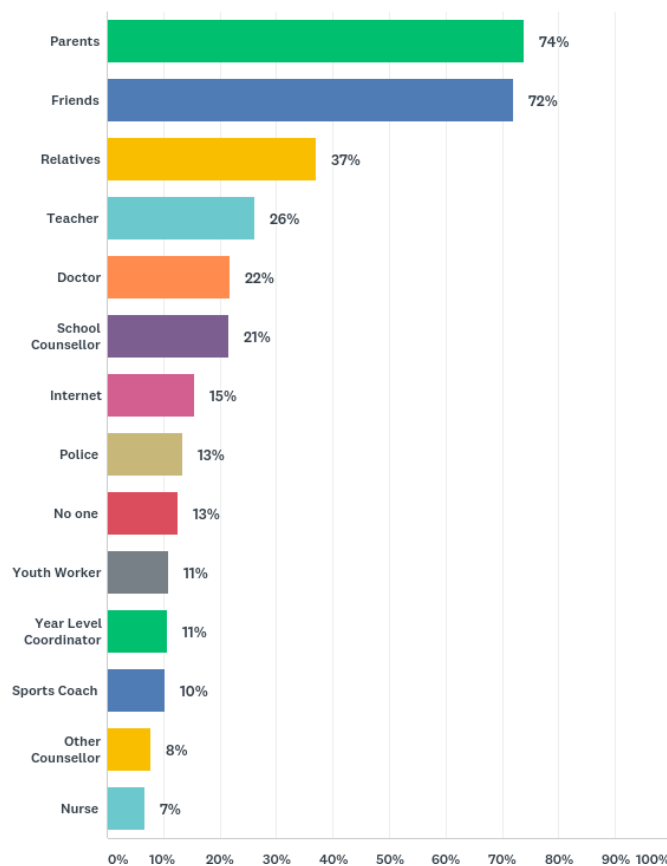
Issues of Concern in 2018 by Age Group



Top five issues of concern comparison across age groups:

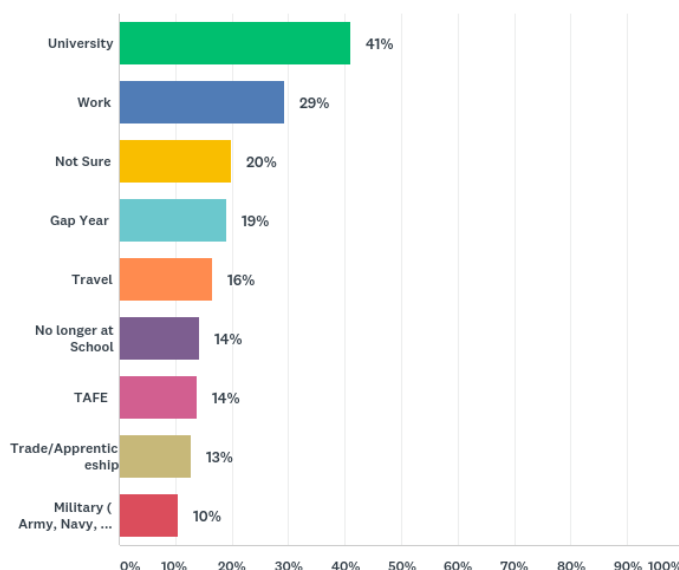
- ❖ Boredom featured in the top five issues of concern for almost all age groups (except 21-24 yr olds) and almost 10% higher for the 18-20 age group.
- ❖ Body image featured in the top five concerns for all age groups and rated as the top concern for the 15-17-year-old age group
- ❖ Mental health problems featured in the top five concerns for almost all age groups (except 12-14 yr olds)
- ❖ Suicide featured in the top five concerns for almost all age groups (except 15-17 yr olds)
- ❖ Pressures of school work was a top five concern for both the 12-14 and 15-17 age groups
- ❖ Cost of activities/recreation was a top five concern for both the 18-20 and 21-24 age groups
- ❖ Fitting in was a top five concern for the 15-17-year-old age group
- ❖ Friendship problems was a top five concern for the 12-14-year-old age group

Q12 Who would you go to for advice and support about issues that are concerning you? (tick all that apply)



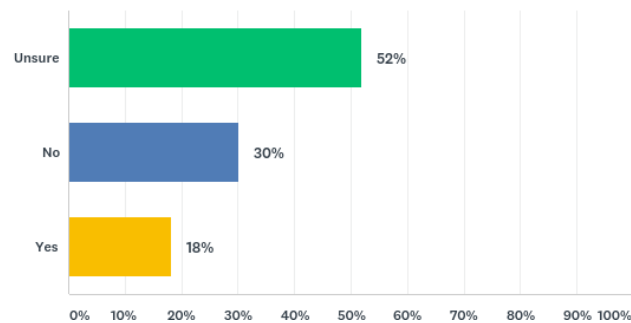
Parents (74%) and friends (72%) were the most favoured people that young people were going to for advice and support followed by relatives (37%), teachers (26%) and doctors (22%).

Q13 If you are still at High/Secondary School, what are your plans after leaving?(If you are no longer at High/Secondary School, Please select "No longer at School" to move to next question)



The majority of survey respondents who were still in secondary school were planning on attending University (41%). 29% of secondary school respondents were planning on working after finishing school, 20% weren't sure of their plans and 19% were planning a gap year and travel (16%) after secondary school. 14% of respondents were planning on seeking a trade/apprenticeship or attending TAFE and the remaining 10% had plans to join the military.

Q14 After leaving secondary/high school do you plan to stay in Benalla Rural City?



The majority of young people (52%) who completed a survey were unsure if they would stay in Benalla after leaving secondary school. 30% said they were not going to stay in the Benalla Rural City and 18% indicated that they were planning on staying in the area.

“I would like to explore the world but would definitely come back to Benalla.”

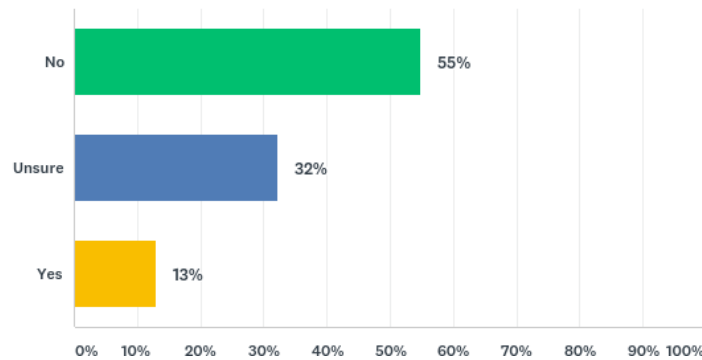
“There are no career opportunities for my line of desired work.”

“I plan to stay in Benalla as my family is in the area and I love the community and town.”

“I like Benalla but there are many other places I would like to try. I am unsure whether or not I’ll stay here.”

“I don’t want to raise a family in a town with so little to do”.

Q15 Do you think you will return to live in Benalla in the future?



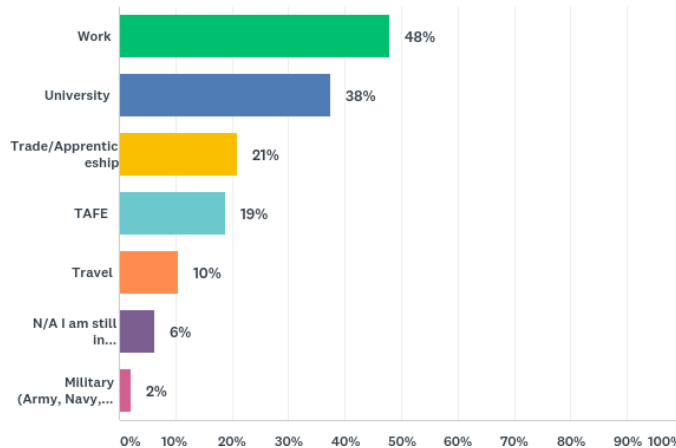
Over half of young people who completed a survey (55%) indicated that they did not think that they would return to live in Benalla in the future, 32% were unsure and 13% said yes, they did think they would return to Benalla in the future.

“Only to visit family/friends”.

“I want to go see places away from here”.

“Not big enough for my future endeavors”.

Q16 If you are no longer at High/Secondary School, what did you do after leaving?

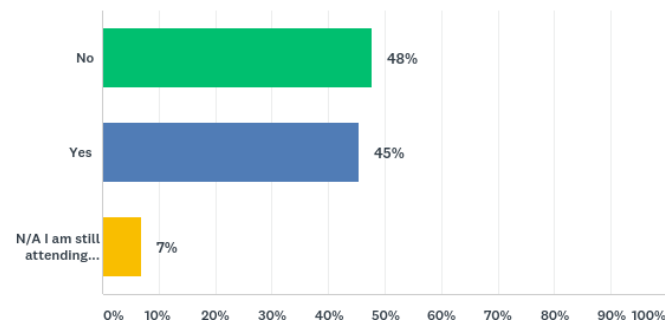


Of the 48 respondents who were no longer at secondary school almost half worked after secondary school (48%), 38% attended University, 21% were completing a trade/apprenticeship, 19% attended TAFE, 10% travelled and 2% joined the military.

“I felt pressured and under prepared to enter uni. I studied 3 years of a double degree, dropped out and had a gap year and currently in second year of a different area of study.”

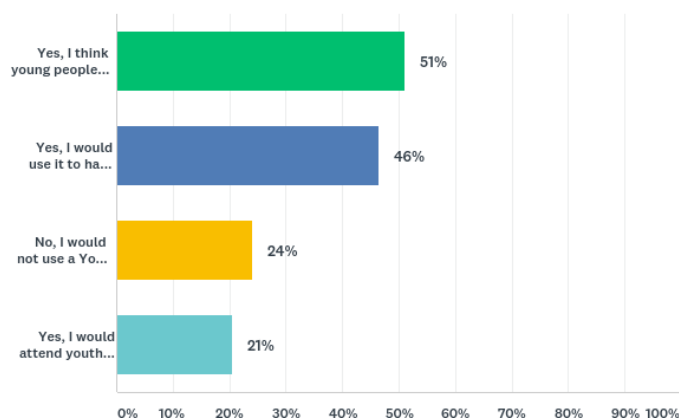
“Online TAFE course and now doing online Uni.”

Q17 Did you leave the Benalla area to Study or Work after leaving High/Secondary School?



Of the 44 respondents who answered this question (those no longer in school) slightly more young people said they hadn't left Benalla to study or work (48%), than those that had left Benalla to study or work (45%).

Q18 There has been talk about establishing a youth space in Benalla Rural City. This would be a safe, inclusive, central space for young people in Benalla to access information, services, participate in youth based events, programs and generally hangout. Would you use a space like this? (tick all that apply)



51% of respondents thought that young people would benefit from a youth space in Benalla, 46% said they would use the space and 21% said they would attend youth programs and events at the space. 24% of respondents said that they would not use a youth space.

Q19. What do you like about where you live?

Young people who filled in a survey in 2018 shared a number of things that they like about where they live, the most prevalent were:

1. Quiet/peaceful (15%)
2. Friendly people (14%)
3. Small country town feel (13%)
4. Friends close by/ease of making friends (9%)
5. Open space (8%)
6. The activities, events, festivals on offer (8%)
7. Nature (6%)
8. Community connectedness (6%)
9. Ease of getting around (6%)
10. Family nearby (6%)
11. Proximity to other major centres (5%)
12. Everyone knows everyone (5%)
13. Safe community (4%)
14. Sports on offer (3%)
15. Beautiful town (3%)
16. Lake (3%)
17. Opportunities for young people (2%)
18. The art scene/culture (2%)

Also mentioned as things they like by young people to a lesser extent were: the pool, skate park, BPACC, Swanpool Cinema, schools, cleanliness of town, freedom, FREEZA, fishing, weather, Benalla Festival, NEA, Broken River, Lake Nillacootie.

“Everyone is friendly and it’s a good rural community.”

“It’s a quiet country town, where everybody knows each other.”

“It’s central to a lot of other towns/cities which have more to do”.

“I like the sporting aspect of Benalla and I like the Benalla lake and that the majority of people in Benalla are good people.”

“It’s a small town so it’s easy to know a lot of people and have heaps of friends. Feeling of being safer due to it being a smaller town.”

“A growing art scene and the unique features in town including the lake.”

Q20. What don't you like about where you live?

Young people who filled in a survey in 2018 shared a number of things that they DON'T like about where they live, the most prevalent were:

1. Boredom/lack of activities for young people/nothing to do (23%)
2. Isolation (9%)
3. Lack of variety of shopping (9%)
4. Drugs (6%)
5. Lack of transport (especially for young people living outside of Benalla) (3%)
6. Bullying (3%)
7. Lack of career/education options (2%)
8. Family Violence (2%)
9. Lack of jobs for young people (2%)
10. No night life (1%)
11. Lack of hang out spaces for young people (1%)
12. Not enough live music (1%)
13. Suicide (1%)
14. Discrimination (1%)
15. Neighbours (1%)

Also mentioned as negatives to where they live to a lesser extent were: hoons, feeling unsafe at night, lack of mental health services, littering, graffiti, alcohol misuse, too crowded, poverty, 'bad people', quality of schools/education, cost of food, run down parts of town, smoking, lack of affordable housing, not enough sporting opportunities, Hospital services.

"There is nothing to do, no night life or events, just boring."

"The lack of places to go with friends and lack of work opportunities and lack of shopping centres."

"There are not enough jobs for young people."

"To many druggies around Benalla and dealers trying to convince young people to try drugs."

"The high rate of bullying and suicides in such a small town."

"The lack of support for LGBTIQ People and people dealing with harassment and bullying."

"No desired career opportunities."

"Perhaps how conservative and close minded some are around the town. I don't really like that there's not really a lot of support/funding put behind such things as live original music and different stuff going on around the town. It'd just be nice if people were a bit more open minded, but I believe it's starting to happen! Things are definitely happening."

Q21. If you could do one thing to improve things for young people where you live what would you do?

Young people who filled in a survey in 2018 shared a number of things that they felt would improve things for young people where they live, the most prevalent were:

9. More activities and events for young people (31%) *e.g. evening and weekend events, music and festivals, no cost activities and events, youth clubs, youth talent events, access to basketball stadium, new release movies at BPACC, extended summer pool hours, gaming.*
10. Improved supports/outcomes for young people (16%) *e.g. better mental health supports, improved drug and alcohol support and education, addressing bullying, making supports more accessible, youth club for LGBTIQ young people, tackle homophobia, support for homeless youth, youth groups/youth support group.*
11. Infrastructure (14%) *e.g. waterslide at pool, waterpark, more swings at park, improved rocket park to make it youth friendly, youth friendly parks, go-kart track at Winton, outdoor basketball courts, bigger skate park, indoor sports centre.*
12. Youth Space/centre (11%) *e.g. youth spaces where young people can be welcome, improved library spaces for young people, youth space/centre that offers programs and supports for young people.*
13. Improved safety/image (10%) *e.g.: tackle drugs, ensure community spaces are safe, clean up run down areas/litter.*
14. Better shopping (6%) *e.g. clothing shops and food outlets.*
15. Improved education, career and job opportunities (6%) *e.g. access to post-secondary study options locally, more jobs and career opportunities for young people.*
16. Improved transport (6%) *e.g. transport to support young people to attend activities and events, transport to support further study and employment opportunities.*

“Offer sporting opportunities at a cheaper rate or even free.”

“Create a better night life for Benalla.”

“Encourage and promote acceptance.”

“Create more jobs”.

“Have more social events for young people.”

“Have a place where young people feel safe going to talk about what is worrying them, and for them to feel like they can talk about anything without getting judged.”

“Get a water park/water slide and set up that blow up obstacle course at the outside pool more often.”

“Allow for our voices to be heard and provide opportunities for personal and professional growth.”

Benalla Rural City Youth Strategy Youth Focus Group Results

A total of 139 young people attended a focus group to provide input into the development of the Benalla Rural City Youth Strategy. Focus groups were held with the following groups:

- Student Leadership Group Benalla P-12
- Hands on Learning Group Benalla P-12
- Edspace senior students
- Benalla Flexible Learning Centre
- CVGT
- Benalla Leo's Group
- Benalla P-12 year 7 and 8 students

A summary of what all focus group participants said is provided below.

What do you like about Benalla?

- Safe community
- Friendly community
- Good sporting opportunities
- Easy to get around
- Walking tracks
- Art activities/NEA
- BPACC
- Art Gallery
- Soldiers memorial
- Rose gardens/botanical gardens
- Library
- Weary Dunlop statue
- HOCUS group
- Winton Motor Raceway
- Golf course
- Bus every hour from east to west
- FREEZA
- Waminda Community House
- Come and try days
- Festivals e.g. Wall to Wall Festival, Benalla Festival
- Youth groups e.g. young Leos, girl guides
- Skate Park
- Benalla Show
- Rocket park
- The Lake
- The swimming pool
- Good medical facilities
- Take away shops
- Variety of activities available e.g. Freeza, Open Mic Night
- Close to other major centres
- Open spaces
- Close to family

What are the key challenges/concerns?

- Not many job opportunities- can be hard to find a job unless you know someone
- Affordability of events and activities
- The pool has no waterslide
- Polluted Lake
- Graffiti around town
- Littering/untidy streets
- Confidentiality of medical services
- Not enough public toilets
- Schools need improving
- Lack of outdoor activities
- Can't swim in the lake due to contamination
- Not much to do except go to pubs
- No night life
- Lack of support services
- Long waiting lists for some support services
- Family violence
- Unsafe feeling at night in Benalla
- Boredom-Not much to do for young people, children and old people seem to be catered for
- Youth mental health issues/suicide
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- The shops are not open after 5pm and there are no shops for young people.
- The Library is not open on a Sunday and is only open from 9am-12pm on a Saturday so there are limited options for places to go to study
- There are no quiet spaces in the library for young people to study
- BPACC movies are shown long after the release date so they go to Wangaratta to see new movies
- Lack of sporting areas that are open to all
- Unsafe feeling at skate park
- Unsure where to access services
- Bullying
- Lack of places for young people to 'hang out'
- Lack of public transport options
- Limited career/work opportunities
- BMX track is too small/needs improvements
- Reliability of school busses
- Road safety
- Noisy neighbors
- Unfriendly people

What is needed to make Benalla a better place for young people?

- Somewhere to hang out as there are not many places for young people to hang out apart from MacDonalds.
- A youth café
- More live gigs/music

- More variety of events and activities e.g. color run, show and shine, fun activities
- Movie Nights – Inflatable outside cinema, live music concerts, color runs
- Improve/upgrade skate park and BMX track
- A water park for all ages
- More playgrounds suitable for young people
- Upgrade rocket park, bring back old equipment
- Improved promotion of events/activities- use flyers too
- Reliable transport to Shepparton/Wangaratta
- More sporting opportunities
- A youth run Snapchat
- Not all young people have access to technology- ensure you include them
- More hands-on learning in schools
- Improvements to pony club
- Art events/exhibitions
- Gaming events/competitions
- Trampoline park

What can the Benalla community do over the next four years to make Benalla a better place for young people?

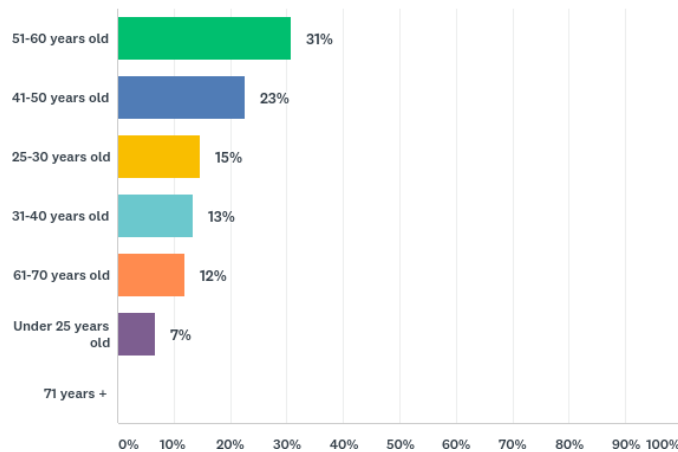
- More opportunities to hang out/youth space
- More job opportunities for young people
- Improve community perceptions of youth
- Social enterprise projects
- Tackle bullying
- New release movies at BPACC
- Make activities more affordable
- Protect the environment
- Provide a wider range of sporting activities
- Re-open waterslide
- Wider of variety of courses at Benalla TAFE
- Wall to Wall for young people
- Billboard for youth events
- Improve internet connectivity/access
- More shops
- More community events
- More music events
- Promote where young people can go to access services
- Indoor sports centre
- Affordable swimming/splash park
- Funding for young people programs/events
- More notices/flyers about activities/events happening in town
- More accessible/affordable transport
- Improved frequency of public transport to Wangaratta/Shepparton
- More activities for young people that doesn't include technology/IT
- PRIDE marches

What Parents/Caregivers/Community Said

Benalla Rural City Youth Strategy Parent/Caregiver/Community Survey Results

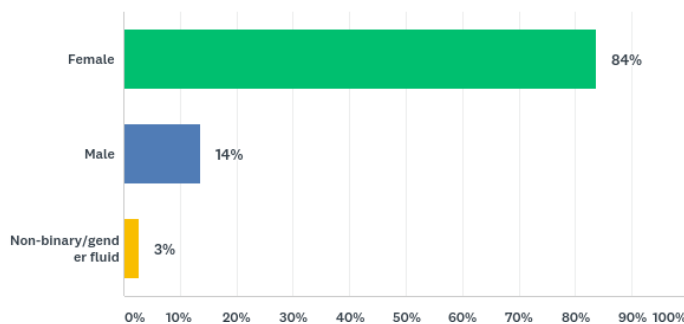
A total of 76 community members filled in an online survey, results are highlighted below.

Q1 How old are you?



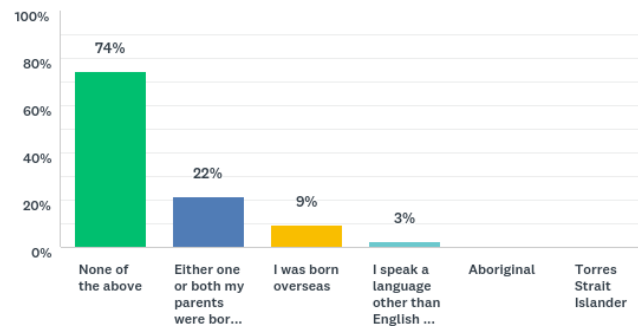
A broad range of age groups from under 25 years to 70 years of age completed the online survey. The top three age groups of respondents were 51-60 years old (31%), 41-50 years old (23%) and 25-30 years old (15%).

Q2 Which of the following best describes your current gender identity?



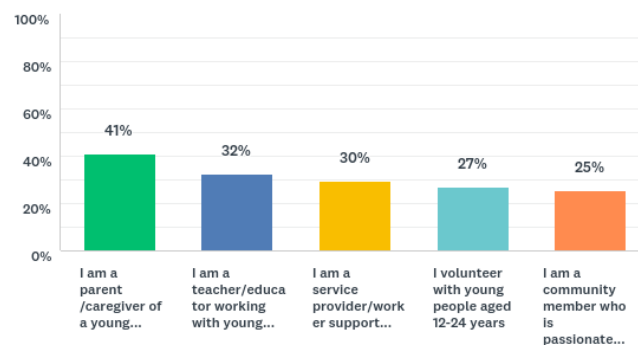
There were markedly more female respondents (84%) than male (14%) and the remaining 3% identified as non-binary/gender fluid.

Q3 What is your cultural background? (tick all that apply)



Survey respondents highlighted their diverse backgrounds, 22% of respondents had either one or both parents born overseas, 9% were born overseas themselves and 3% shared that they spoke a language other than English at home.

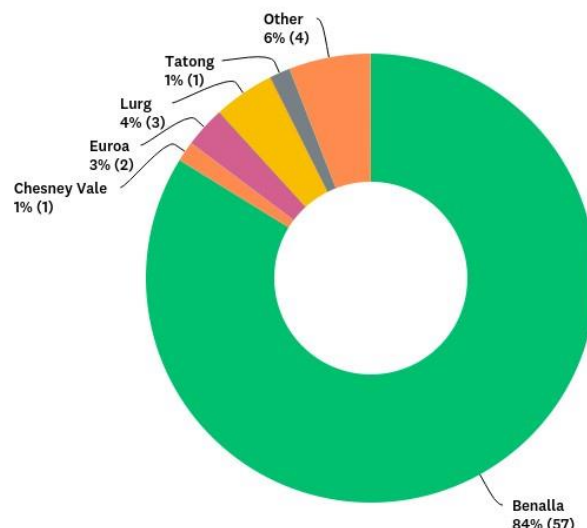
Q4 Which of the following best describes you? (Tick all that apply)



41% of respondents were parents/caregivers, 32% were teachers/educators, 30% were service providers/workers, 27% were volunteers working with young people and the remaining 25% were passionate about young people in their community.

Q5 Where do you live?

The vast majority of survey respondents lived in Benalla (84%). A smaller number of respondents were living in outlying towns such as: Lurg (4%), Euroa (3%), Tatong (1%) and Chesney Vale (1%).



Q6. What do you think helps to make Benalla Rural City a positive place for young people?

Survey respondents identified a number of things that they thought helped to make Benalla Rural City a positive place for young people, namely:

- The wide range of sports and recreation activities
- A variety of events and activities on offer
- Sports and recreation facilities (e.g. skate park, sportsgrounds, BMX track)
- Arts & culture activities
- Caring community members
- The country atmosphere
- Community connectedness
- Opportunities for young people
- Positive promotion of young people
- Tomorrow Today Foundation
- Youth engagement
- Education/Schools
- Live4Life
- Open Spaces
- Benalla Festival
- BPACC
- Safe community
- HOCUS
- Local businesses employing young people
- Support services

“People wanting to make this town a positive place for youth and continuously trying to make improvements to meet the needs of the youth.”

“Relaxed country atmosphere with great access to the outdoors, sports and the arts.”

“I think it has many community options for young people like swimming, dancing, and sports of many kinds.”

“Great sporting facilities for those interested in sport.”

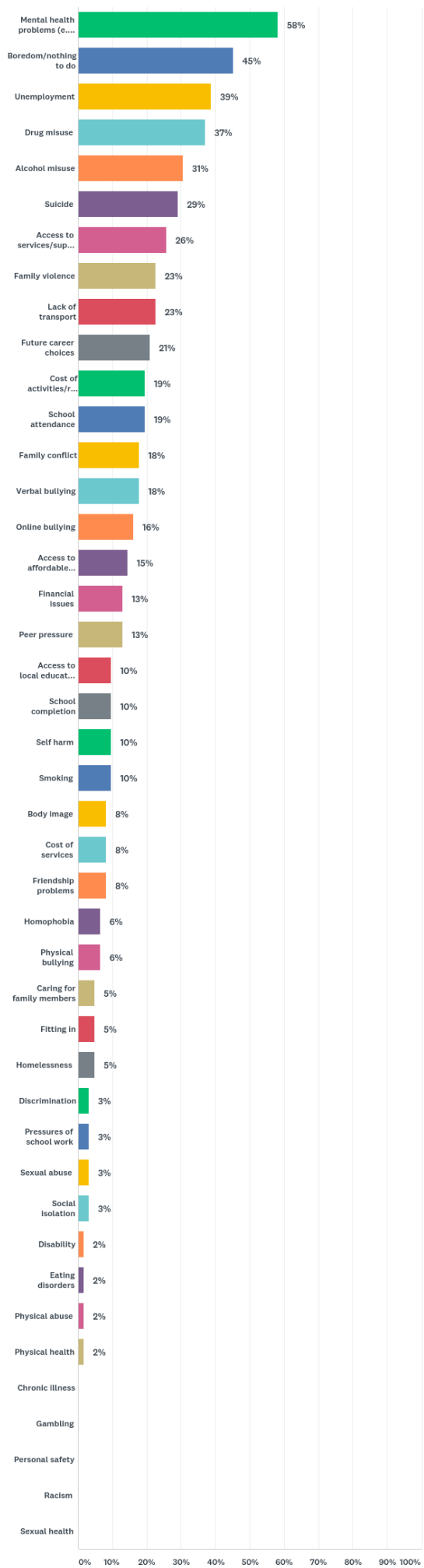
“There are good businesses who employ young people and lots of sports available.”

“The skate park, FReeZA, Connect 9 which provides young people with the ability to connect with the community.”

“Live4Life program in schools. Excellent sporting clubs. Good skatepark and BMX track.”

“Encouragement for young people, support programs for those with mental health issues, community activities for young people to attend, positive school environments.”

Q7 What do you see as the TOP FIVE challenges facing Benalla Rural City young people aged 12-24 years? (tick FIVE ONLY)



Parents/Caregivers/Community Members were asked to choose the top five challenges facing Benalla Rural City Young People. The top ten challenges of concern were:

1. Mental health problems (58%)
2. Boredom/nothing to do (45%)
3. Unemployment (39%)
4. Drug misuse (37%)
5. Alcohol misuse (31%)
6. Suicide (29%)
7. Access to services/supports (26%)
8. Family violence (23%)
9. Lack of transport (23%)
10. Future career choices (21%)

Comments:

“Access to specific services for students and families with disabilities”.

“Lack of family support to make good life choices”.

“Clear pathways, awareness and access to available services”.

“Bullying in general”.

Q8. Can you tell us a bit more about the top five challenges for young people that you chose?

Respondents expanded on their key concerns for young people, namely:

1. Lack of access to services

Young people's lack of access to support services was named by a number of respondents, of particular mention was the difficulty for Benalla Rural City young people to access mental health services.

"Benalla youth do not have access to the assistance that is required for mental health."

"There is a complete lack of services for Mental Health. All psychologists in the area are full. The mental health service has a 3 month wait list."

"The lack of access to coordinated mental health services is appalling compared to what is available in metro areas."

Many of the kids seem to have mental health issues & there are limited mental health support services especially bulk billing counsellors & psychologists.

2. Bullying

Respondents highlighted concerns around the rate of bullying, the lack of successful interventions/responses to decrease bullying and the overall impacts of bullying on the mental health of young people.

"With the bullying and judgement bring high increase of suicide."

"School environment and lack of response from schools to deal with bullying is a huge issue. They talk the talk but don't act."

"Bullying I believe is also still a big issue as there is lots of talk of it in the community."

"Bullying occurs more often now that our youth have access to social media."

"Bullying is rife throughout the community. It has resulted in a high number of suicides and this doesn't seem to be a problem that is being addressed by the schools or the wider community. There needs to be a forum for this to be addressed and real processes put in place."

3. Mental health issues

Depression, anxiety and suicide were named as particular concerns by respondents. Youth mental health concerns were also felt to be heightened by the lack of access to suitable services for young people. The pressures to fit in, find employment and the prevalence and use of social media amongst young people were also mentioned as relevant to youth mental health.

"As a mum and working in the field with young people I see a lot of young people with anxiety depression. Who were unable to deal with it and hence they use alcohol and drugs to numb their feelings."

"Some young people do not fit the common mold and find it very difficult to live in our society. Some do not want to be in a competitive society."

"I think mental health is still a big issue for young people everything is done through technology and some young people do not know how to interact."

4. Engagement in education

Survey respondents expanded on their concerns about engagement in education, specifically: lack of school completion, access to local learning opportunities, the costs associated with further study, lack of transport and poor secondary school attendance.

“As a teacher I’m astounded by the number of kids who refuse to come to school. I think it part of the problem is generational. Parent don’t value education. Also, poor parental skills play a part. Sometimes is too hard to force a strong-willed teenager to go to school. It’s important that every young individual should be given equal and freely accessible learning opportunities.”

“Further education in this town is difficult as it is all in Wangaratta or other towns/cities with no transport. Cost of education is always difficult for this group as they have no income no job to gain an income and they can’t access education to get a job so there is a cycle, which leads to depression and drinking/drugs.”

“I think keeping attendance and engagement at school can help enormously, therefore I would be working closely with the schools and education services in order to help young people through these difficult years.”

“Children aren’t attending school. The schools in Benalla are not suited for all young people, and struggle to cater for students with challenging behaviors.”

5. Boredom

Boredom was further highlighted by survey respondents, specifically the need for a broader range of youth friendly events/activities. Respondents shared their concerns that boredom was related to increased drug and alcohol use and anti-social community behavior.

“Developing more recreation and entertainment options would help keep young people away from bad behavior.”

“Need more things for young people to do they’re bored and that’s why we have so many problems in Benalla.”

“I see that isolation can be an issue, with fewer facilities for young people.”

“Young adults in Benalla, like elsewhere in Australian country towns, feel that there is nothing to do in their towns. This is often not the case; young adults complain of boredom, but this generation has more choices than previous generations.”

“Benalla has very limited activities for young people there is limited live music the Council often focuses on the older population and focuses on arts however a lot of young people aren’t interested in this”.

“Benalla doesn’t have a lot to offer young people, there’s not much to do, which is why they end up going out and drinking.”

“Access to services and youth driven activities. The lack of events or facilities aimed at the youth.”

6. Family violence

The prevalence of family violence incidents in the Benalla Rural City was further highlighted by survey respondents. The trauma associated with young people witnessing family violence and the impact of this on their wellbeing was also emphasised by those who completed a survey.

“Benalla also has a high rate of family violence and our youth would be affected by this on a daily basis, this would lead into other concerns such as mental health again.”

“Family violence has a huge impact on the wellbeing of young people.”

“Domestic violence seems to be increasing.”

“Family violence rates are high with many young people not having the influence of positive adults in their lives.”

7. Drug and alcohol misuse

Youth drug and alcohol misuse was a concern that was further expanded on by respondents. Youth drug and alcohol misuse was thought to be linked to family dysfunction, boredom, mental health issues and peer pressure.

“Alcohol and substance abuse is common throughout communities, and Benalla is no exception.”

“As a mum and working in the field with young people I see a lot of young people with anxiety depression. Who were unable to deal with it and hence they use alcohol and drugs to numb their feelings.”

“Generational routines, my parents did it so why can't I? e.g. drugs, alcohol, underage sex.”

“Benalla youth do not have access to the assistance that is required for mental health, due to alcohol and drug use or due to other reasons.”

“Peer pressure is the most difficult thing for young people to deal with.”

8. Lack of transport

Lack of transport for young people living in the Benalla Rural City was expanded on by survey respondents. The impact of poor access to public transportation was seen to affect young people's ability to access education, employment and recreation/entertainment opportunities.

“It is still difficult for young people to access both work and leisure activities if they have to travel. So, for young people who live out of Benalla on rural properties or smaller towns, and also for young people in Benalla, who want to do some study, but have to travel out of Benalla to achieve this. Better and more frequent train services would help. Also, if young people who live out of Benalla, could catch the school buses (which are often half empty) this would help the transport issue.”

“Similar challenges for young people in other rural towns - transport issues a major challenge.”

“A lot of people have to travel to neighboring towns like WANGARATTA & Shepparton for further education. The transport to and from can be a massive barrier to furthering someone's education & influencing the flow on affects this has on the employment opportunities in the future”.

“Further education in this town is difficult as it is all in Wangaratta or other towns/cities with no transport.”

Q9. What do you think is needed in the Benalla Rural City to support better outcomes for young people?

Survey respondents suggested a number of ideas to support better outcomes for young people across the Benalla Rural City:

- A dedicated and well supported youth space for young people
- More youth focused activities and events
- Better access to TAFE courses in Benalla
- Improved health and well-being supports for young people e.g. generic youth workers, youth counsellors, bulk billed health services, drug and alcohol support
- A broader range of employment opportunities for youth
- Access to affordable further education
- Improved public transportation e.g. for accessing further education, employment and recreation
- Empowering young people to be more civically involved e.g. Youth Council
- Youth led projects/activities and events
- Community engagement initiatives for young people
- Improved mental health supports for young people
- Improved service coordination for young people and their families with complex needs
- Low cost activities for young people
- A range of non- sport activities for young people
- Increased family support for young people and their families
- Enhanced bullying support/programs
- Youth friendly community members, spaces and places
- Strengthened partnerships/ collaboration between schools, services and community

“Access to further education opportunities, access to more options for employment, reliable train service between Benalla/Wangaratta to fit with business hours, activities for young people, places for young people to go.”

“More job opportunities, more mental health services & bulk billing. A youth hub to help with connectedness. Early recognition & intervention to prevent alcohol & other drugs use.”

“New younger blood, in the shire councilors, become more innovative and a place to be, not the place the youth want to get out of.”

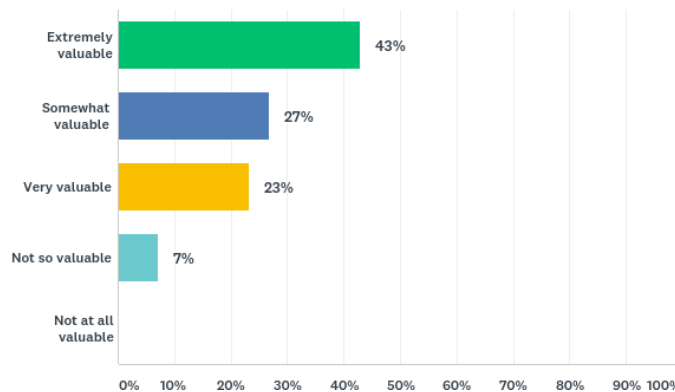
“More generic youth workers, access to mental health services in the town. More community training on how to support each other when they are struggling.”

“Strong partnerships and collaboration between schools, support services and community.”

“A safe place for young people to go would be a great opportunity - especially those who aren't attending school. More access to support workers.”

“A strong message to stay in education/training or find employment that you are passionate about to build happy, resilient, skilled and self-sufficient youth.”

Q10 There is some interest in having a 'youth space' in Benalla, how valuable do you think this would be for young people?



Overall, the majority of survey respondents were supportive of a 'youth space' for Benalla. 66% of respondents felt a youth space would be extremely/very valuable, 27% thought a youth space would be somewhat valuable and the remaining 7% indicated that a youth space in Benalla would be not so valuable.

"There is little to do if youth are not sporty, and the 13-18 age group seems to be neglected. Although 18+ have access to other areas for entertainment, they still need help in other areas, such as mental health, training/education, music events."

"I think that, that would be a great place to go, to make friends and be in a kind, good environment."

"Young people need an area where they can build their skills and be recognised for their talents and what they can offer to the community. We have very talented and skilled young people in our community they just need to be able to showcase them."

"You get the same kids turning up - it's a Band-Aid solution. If anything, kids need inter-generational opportunities like work, service clubs and churches to be coordinated to offer them integrated opportunities."

"Unfortunately, they become a 'hang out' and attract the wrong types of people. If it was policed well, it could be good."

Whilst there was clear community support for a youth space in Benalla, survey respondents shared some key advice for a safe and successful well-functioning space:

- Ensure the space is supervised by non-judgemental qualified/trained adults
- The location would need to be right
- Ensure the space is well resourced
- Offer programs for youth from the space
- Ensure the space is 'youth-led' with young people involved in planning and implementation of activities
- Offer food
- Ensure opening times are suitable for young people

"It would completely depend on what it is and how it was run, you have to make it appeal to them having a 'youth space' would be good but it would have to be done right, it would be hard to make it 'cool' and for youth to attend."

"It would have to be supervised at all times by a trained adult."

"A youth space would be great for young people. There would need to be consideration around the location and what resources will be provided."

Q11. What would you like to see Benalla Rural City Council's Youth Development Program focus on over the next four years?

Survey respondents suggested a number of ideas for Benalla Rural City Council's Youth Development Program to focus on over the next four years:

- Plan with young people to offer a range of activities/events and programs
- Raise mental health awareness and build community capacity to respond
- Youth leadership/personal development/healthy relationships
- Promotion of health lifestyles
- Promotion of youth achievements to the wider community
- Development of the outdoor public pool
- Advocate for affordable education
- Lobby TAFE to offer more local courses at the Benalla campus
- Work with schools to strengthen school attendance and completion rates
- Advocate for improved public transport and explore creative community transport options
- Advocate for improved mental health and wellbeing services and supports for young people
- Work in partnership with key services/groups to enhance joined up collaborative service/community planning and responses and sharing of resources for young people
- Promote available services for young people and their families
- Job creation for youth/social enterprise
- Explore youth development models that are working and seek funding to offer

"Increasing knowledge of services available."

"Mental Health education. Building of young people's strength and confidence."

"Improvement to mental health services."

"Presenting a positive image of our many talented young people."

"Education support and development."

"Offering entertainment, programs for drug, mental health issues and promoting healthy lifestyle hands on cooking garden."

"Activities that are designed to help them in now and into the future as well as services that can help overcome problems."

"Lobbying for transport. Working with local businesses regarding youth employment. Working with GOTAFE to offer more courses in Benalla rather than our students having to travel out of town."

"Work closely with Child Protection, justice department, local police, schools, DHHS, neighborhood house, NESAY and any other community group that can assist and support and understand the challenges the youths of Benalla. Work collaboratively, share the funds and grants. Work towards the same positive outcomes. Stop reinventing the wheel."

Q12. Is there anything else that you wanted to tell us?

"In past years FREEZA events have been mostly positive."

"We need more support for disengaged youth."

"Make it easy for all community members to access information about groups/activities that are occurring. Maybe provide easy to follow links to all services available on the Council website."

"Benalla has a major focus on the elderly if the same efforts could be applied to the youth we may turn things around. The general public could/should be involved in assisting with nurturing our youth."

"Thumbs up to the suicide prevention programs being implemented."

"Media promotion of youth that are doing some great stuff in their individual areas not just football."

"Support and assist beneficial youth programs that are working well already so they can expand and do more."

Benalla Rural City Youth Strategy Parent/Community Focus Group Results

A total of fourteen parent/community members attended two focus groups to share their input into the development of the Benalla Rural City Youth Strategy.

Positive things about Benalla

- Lots of opportunity for young people e.g. sporting groups
- Movies, sport and library are all good
- Good sporting venues
- Skate Park
- BMX track
- Pool
- Community Connectedness
- Volunteering opportunities
- Soccer
- Community mentoring/positive role models
- Art Gallery
- Men's Shed
- Intergenerational projects e.g. Cooinda
- Service Clubs
- SES/CFA
- Social enterprise initiatives
- Outdoor education programs are excellent – e.g. “outward bound”
- L2P program is great for young people in Benalla
- Great open mic nights – young people love these
- Safe
- Sports clubs that allow members to pay off fees over a period of time
- Talent quests and Battle of the Bands events
- Strong support from police in Benalla
- Benalla Bowls clubs provides a bus to assist with associated with sport
- Hocus Group (18-25 young people) is a great program (ran out of Waminda House)
- Good youth groups exist in some of the local churches as well as groups that operate out of (Presbyterian/ Life Church) Violet Town
- Telling positive stories about young people
- Tomorrow Today and Young Sportsmens trust
- Ed Space – Café Club IT tutoring classes
- FCJ/Cooinda program
- Environment – so close to everything, exercise stations, walking tracks, very lucky to have the lake and the outdoor open spaces.
- Wall to Wall – paint by numbers activity is great
- Skate park gets very well utilised. Great to have competitions as part of festival/FreeZA events
- Library is a great space to relax, chill with friends
- McDonalds is great for young people to visit, hang out and use free wi-fi

Key Challenges/Concerns

- Communication – how do we get information out to young people (without mobile phones)
- Too much screen time for young people

- Lack of extended families – teaching young people how to tinker/skills
- Affordability of activities-young people are excluded because of cost
- Intergenerational poverty is an issue
- Youth Mental Health continues to be an issue (social media addiction can impact on young people)
- Youth suicide continues to be an issue (social media bullying impacts on young people)
- Lack of services that can assist young people, a small hospital with limited resources
- Increase in bullying/trolling is impacting on young people health
- Bullying is a key factor impacting on young people
- Limited art opportunities and costs can be prohibitive
- Capacity of families to have multiple children in activities e.g. scout/sports clubs
- Families are busy, so their time can be limited
- Ongoing challenges to attract funding
- A youth space would be appreciated – currently there is no specific space for young people
- Youth employment is a challenge
- Engaging young people, getting them to come to events.
- Technology challenges for providers/parents – Apps move so fast e.g. first Facebook now everything else that has come along
- Transport – does not operate after hours and weekends, fuel costs for driving young people backwards and forwards in rural areas
- Soccer, basketball, hockey – have to travel out of town
- Parents that require additional skills for assistance with parenting of young people
- Engaging young people that are not at school
- Domestic/life skills
- People being relocated to Benalla from outer areas (families) and living in Benalla without local supports/family
- Community needs to change their attitude to young people
- Limited pool opening hours
- Unsafe feeling at Skate Park
- Access to local TAFE courses
- Negative perceptions of young people
- Lack of role models for some young people
- Lack of evening activities/events/shopping
- Rising costs for clubs
- Lack of open spaces around town

What is needed to make Benalla a better place for younger people?

- More programs for young people at the library
- Support for parents to assist in providing help and strategies to cope with young people
- Engaging parents in the L2P program, providing support to parents to learn about the program
- Supporting parents with technology e.g. pornography/bullying
- Sign up to SMS texting (Tomorrow Today)
- Advocacy for funding to support young people
- Youth Space/Café model for training
- Gaming activities
- More young people volunteering

- Youth champions in community
- Community mentors
- More good news stories
- Clubs to coordinate/assist with transport/membership costs
- Developing a positive profile of young people in Benalla Rural City
- More leadership opportunities
- Getting more young people into work experience/jobs
- Communication – continue to work with young people and their families and businesses to look at employment opportunities
- Opportunities for young people to be mentored e.g. aviation museum/men's shed
- Exploring options to pay for a bus for sporting clubs to provide bus transport to travel to games
- Explore transport options
- A Cool Heads program in Benalla
- Improve walking track around lake for scooters/prams

What can the Benalla Community do over the next four years to help make Benalla a better place for young people?

- Better communication – give people the resources/information they require to support young people e.g. youth mental health cards
- Library to co-ordinate programs/workshops for parents
- Library to co-ordinate events and programs for young people
- Positive images of young people – link into the Ensign
- Connecting with the local media to promote good news stories to the Ensign
- Develop Youth Friendly spaces
- More mentoring opportunities for young people
- Continue to offer “interview” skills including how to dress, such as Benalla P-12 and Tomorrow Today program
- More “breaking down” barriers between young people and older people e.g. age friendly and FCJ/Cooinda
- Looking at L2P car being used for creative transport options
- More voluntary opportunities for young people
- Looking at creative options around transport
- Utilise Benalla Health bus for community events
- Continue to foster stronger community partnerships
- Revamping and updating Who, What, Where Benalla
- Co-locate youth programs in senior citizens building
- Support sports clubs to better engage young people/families
- Stronger youth voice in community
- Bike tracks through Jaycee Island
- Kayak/boating- more use of Lake
- More activities during holidays
- Improved walking track
- More arts and theatre activities
- Mini spartan events around Lake
- Flying fox/rock climbing-something for teenagers

Benalla Rural City Youth Strategy Service Provider (BYSPN) Focus Group Results

A focus group was held with the Benalla Youth Service Providers Network (BYSPN), eighteen providers shared their input.

What do you think helps to make Benalla Rural City a positive place for young people?

- BYSPN – well attended, opportunity to network and for support
- The Mental Health first aid - Live4Life building awareness of mental health in young people and parents/charges, seeing positive change
- Partnership approach - strong partnership between schools, service providers and council.
- Tomorrow Today Foundation - work they do in and out of schools, funding, especially for young people, wouldn't get as much done without them
- Benalla Flexible Learning Centre – now over 70 students, started with none, opportunities, young people not engaged in education and training
- Lake & walking tracks – value our environment, different options
- Wall to Wall Street Art Festival – arts and culture
- Benalla schools – doing careers advising especially well, better than other areas.
- Social networking connecting with community
- Sporting opportunities diverse e.g. Boxing club
- North East Artisans – art programs supporting young people e.g. Art show, work experience, different ways to connect
- Local Learning and Employment Network - hands on trade expo in Winton last year where over 1000 students attended
- Inaugural Proud & Deadly awards in Benalla
- Emergence of social enterprises e.g. BFLC, Edspace, NEA
- Intergenerational project, Coinda Find Our Voice, Café Club (CWA Hall) young people assisting older people with IT, FOCUS, Waminda Café club
- Crime statistics – are they decreasing?
- Help seeking higher education (options limited) accessing services barriers breaking down
- GP's in school program/bulk billing, clinics all able to bulk bill younger people
- Youth Crews
- Leadership opportunities
- Skate park involving young people
- Hub for young people

What do you think are the key challenges that young people aged 12 – 24 years currently face?

- Lack extra support in Benalla Rural City, e.g. Counsellors, psychologists etc. (Headspace)
- Transport – young people in crisis or attending courses outside Benalla can't access services, can't access other buses e.g. Cathedral College bus, trains do not correlate with times needed, young people missing opportunities available, "disengages young people – another notch in the belt of failures", needs to be sustainable, extra services needed between towns e.g. Wangaratta and Benalla.
- Lack of affordable housing, private rental unaffordable, need to remove young people from the community if can get in, couch surfing is often the only option if they're lucky (forced to manipulate the system so can access a bed)
- NE Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service promised in Benalla,
- Higher complexity of young people presenting to generalist services

- Access to specialist services non-existent
- Waiting lists for support services
- Amount of work staff have to put into do NDIS in fighting for family issues
- Lack of mental health support services including when young people are in crisis
- Schools – some young people not fitting into schools in Benalla (IQ not low enough for special, not funded, age gap, Edspace good but not affordable for many families)
- Work with vulnerable families is getting more complex
- Getting diagnosis for getting NDIS is difficult to start with and the NDIS system is hard to negotiate
- Family therapy is a gap
- Agencies working in silos
- Difficulty of coordinating work with young people/families who have complex needs/using many services
- Stress and burn out of workers
- Staff turnover issues
- Support for workers, debriefing would really help

What do you think is needed in the Benalla Rural City to support better outcomes for young people?

- Viable youth space that's youth friendly
- Support services that follow through and don't over promise
- North East Health careers forum
- More hands-on learning in schools
- Alternative learning programs
- Support for young people to gain employment
- Continue with PEEP programs.
- Café club model, cross age tutoring.
- More support and events for LGBTIQI young people
- Glow officer Victoria Police
- Better organised service system in Benalla.
- Youth Hub – one stop shop, where young people can access services in one spot - drop in, access services, be referred on
- Mapping of services – funding logic – advocacy for what services are needed
- Looking after parents of children with mental illnesses.
- Easy to understand information on services and supports for young people, families and services
- Better support for workers
- Work to support schools, so much falling on schools, teachers are not counsellors
- Offer a range of TAFE courses in our own community
- Drivers education offered in schools

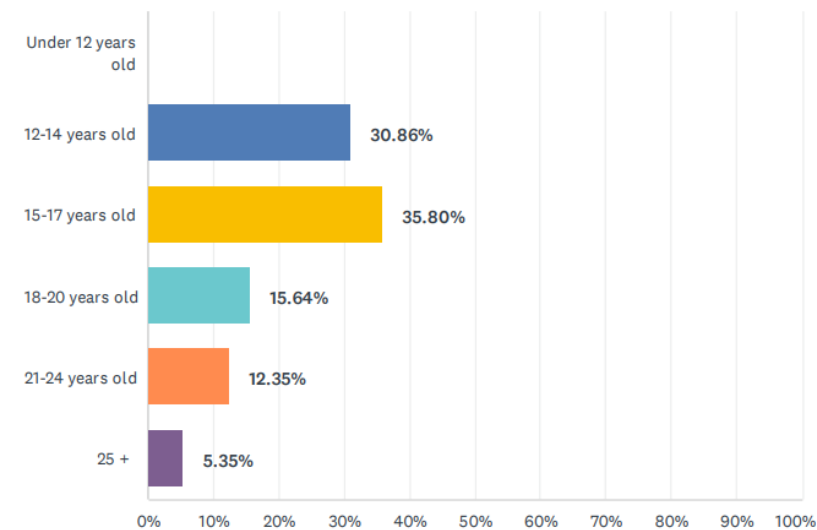
What could BYSPN do over the next four years to help improve outcomes for young people?

- Know who's who in the zoo- support networking
- Strengthen connections amongst workers/services
- Share information
- Advocate for the needs of young people (and their families)
- Provide opportunities for workers to learn from each other e.g. community of practice
- Keep kids positive, engaged where possible.
- Guide the Benalla Rural City Youth Strategy and keep it on track.
- Advocate for Headspace in Benalla
- Explore opportunities to strengthen collaboration between services
- Undertake service mapping
- Hold an annual debrief/get together
- Build on and support Who What Where

2021 Youth Strategy Survey Results – 243 responses

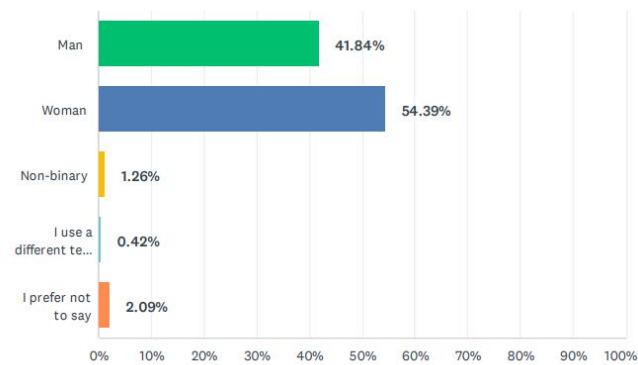
Q1 How old are you?

Answered: 243 Skipped: 0



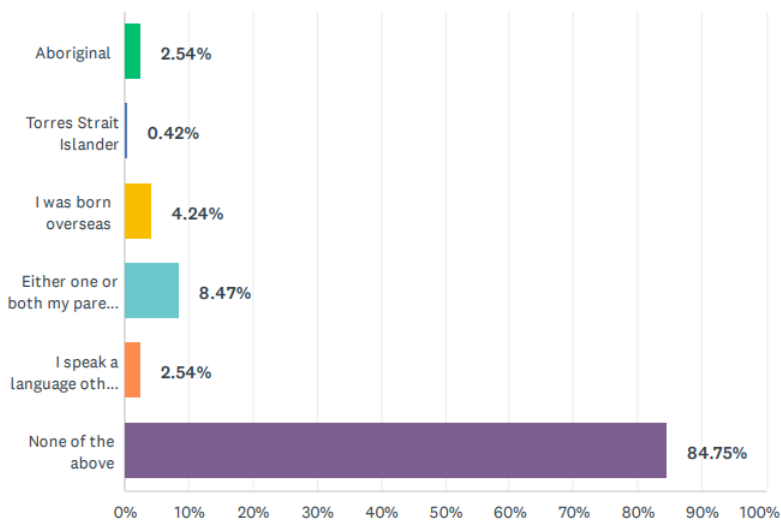
Q2 Which of the following best describes your current gender identity?

Answered: 239 Skipped: 4



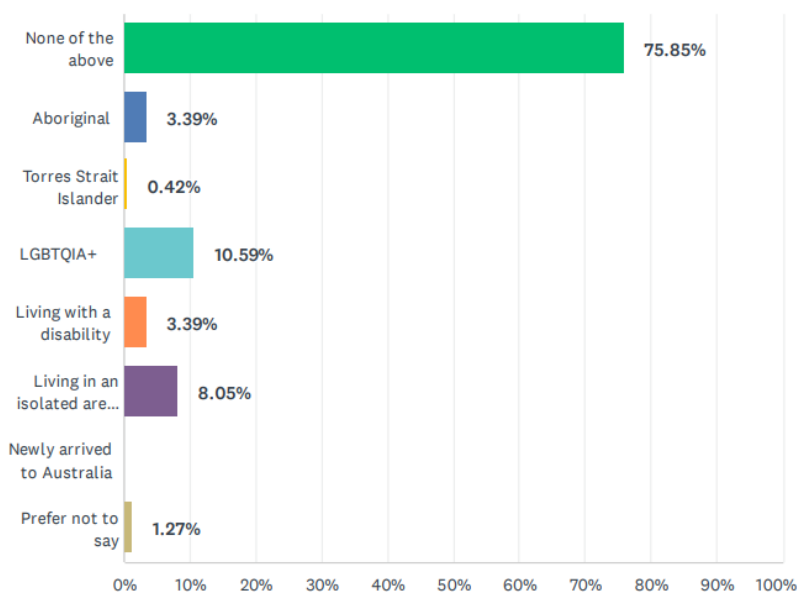
Q3 What is your cultural background? (tick all that apply)

Answered: 236 Skipped: 7



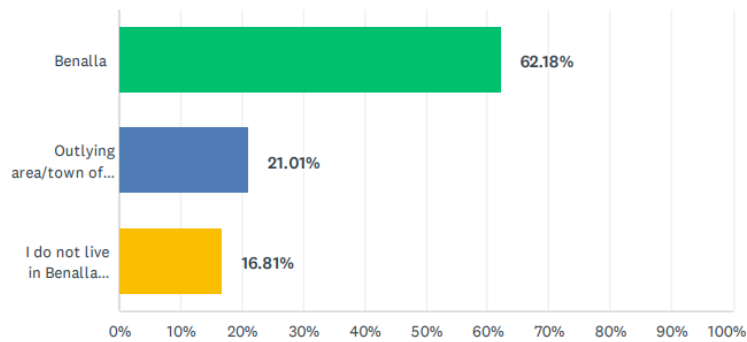
Q4 Do you identify as any of the following? (tick all that apply)

Answered: 236 Skipped: 7



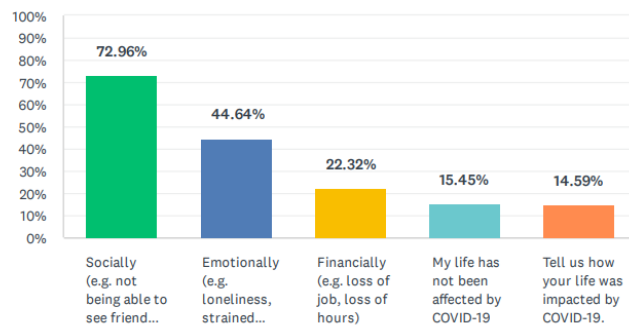
Q5 Where do you live?

Answered: 238 Skipped: 5



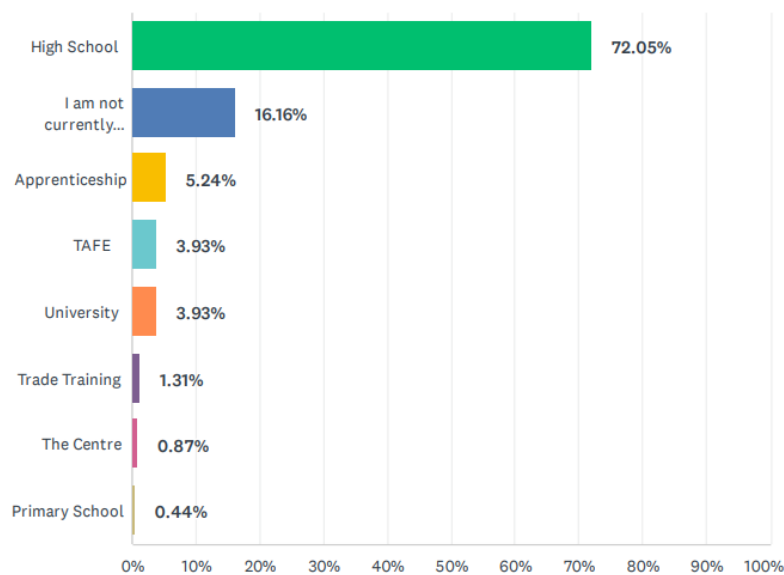
Q6 COVID-19 has impacted us all in different ways. Which areas of your life have been impacted? (please tick all that apply)

Answered: 233 Skipped: 10



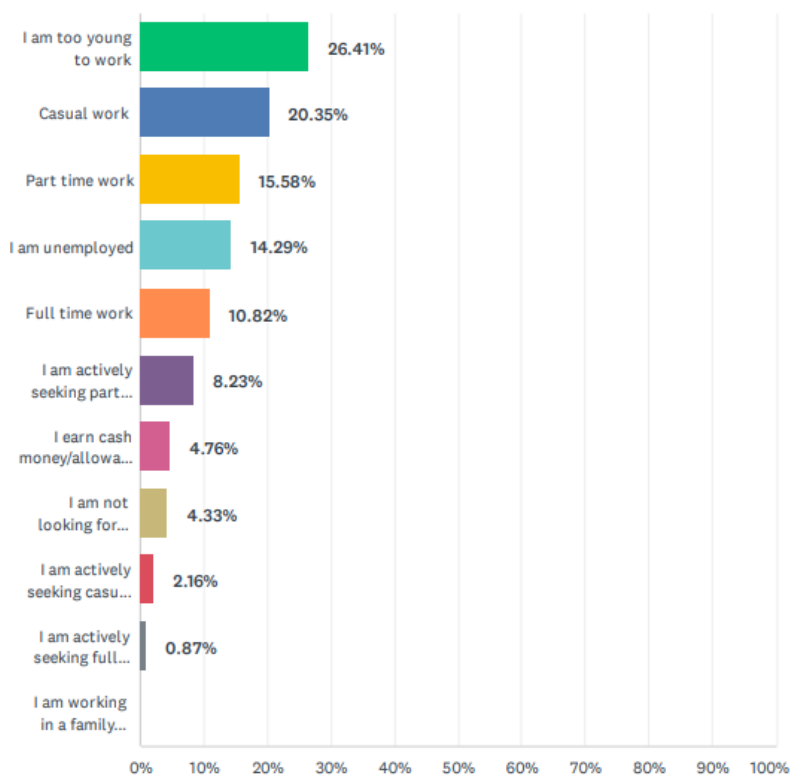
Q7 Are you currently studying? (tick all that apply)

Answered: 229 Skipped: 14



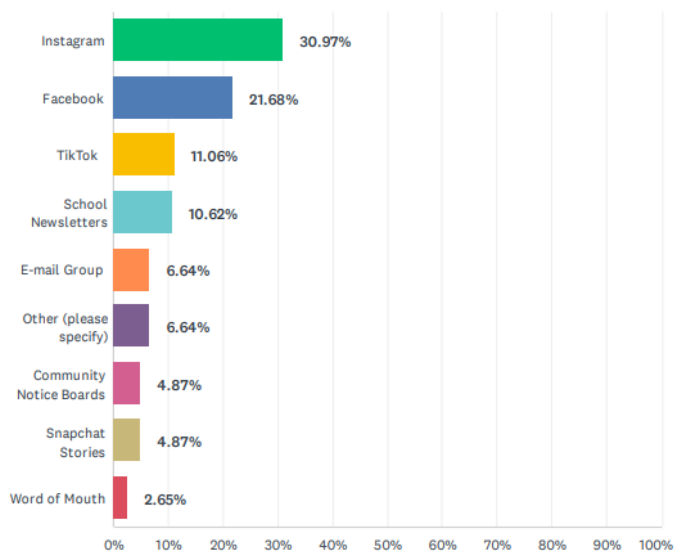
Q8 What is your employment status? (tick all that apply)

Answered: 231 Skipped: 12



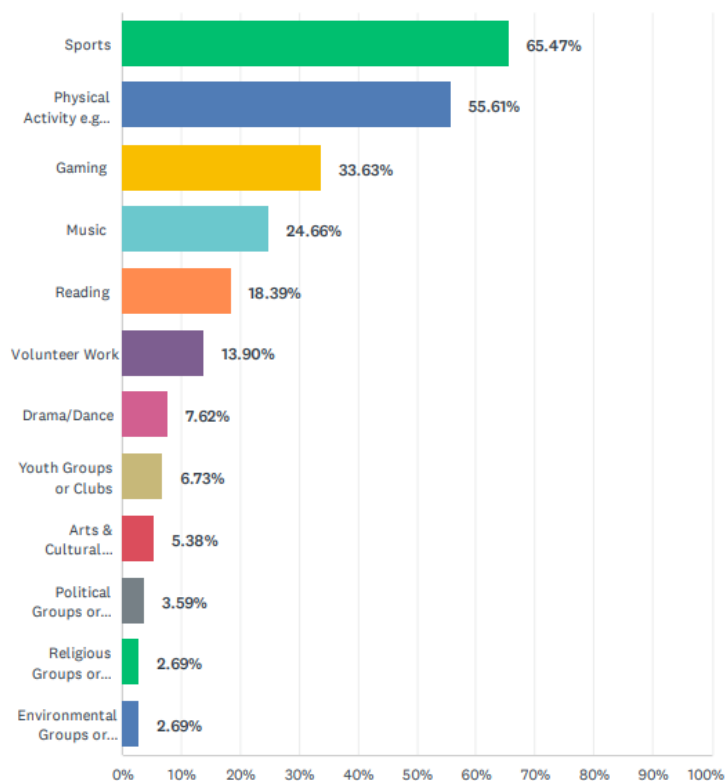
Q9 What is the best way for Youth Service providers to connect with young people?

Answered: 226 Skipped: 17



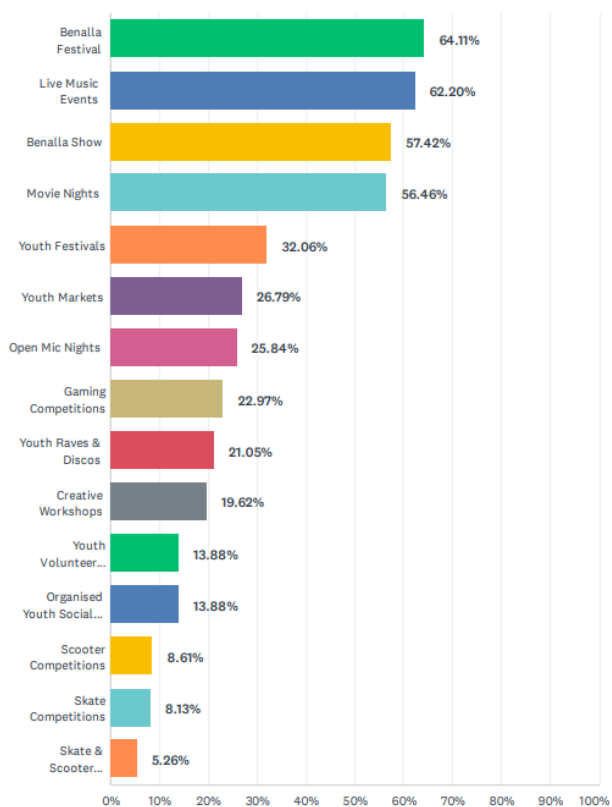
Q10 What activities do you participate in? (tick all that apply)

Answered: 223 Skipped: 20



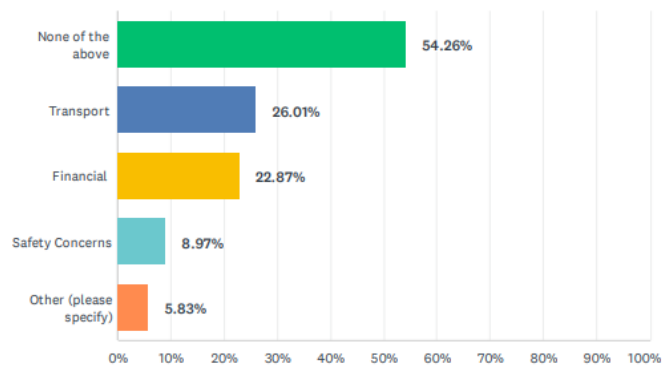
Q11 What activities and events would you be interested in attending? (tick all that apply)

Answered: 209 Skipped: 34



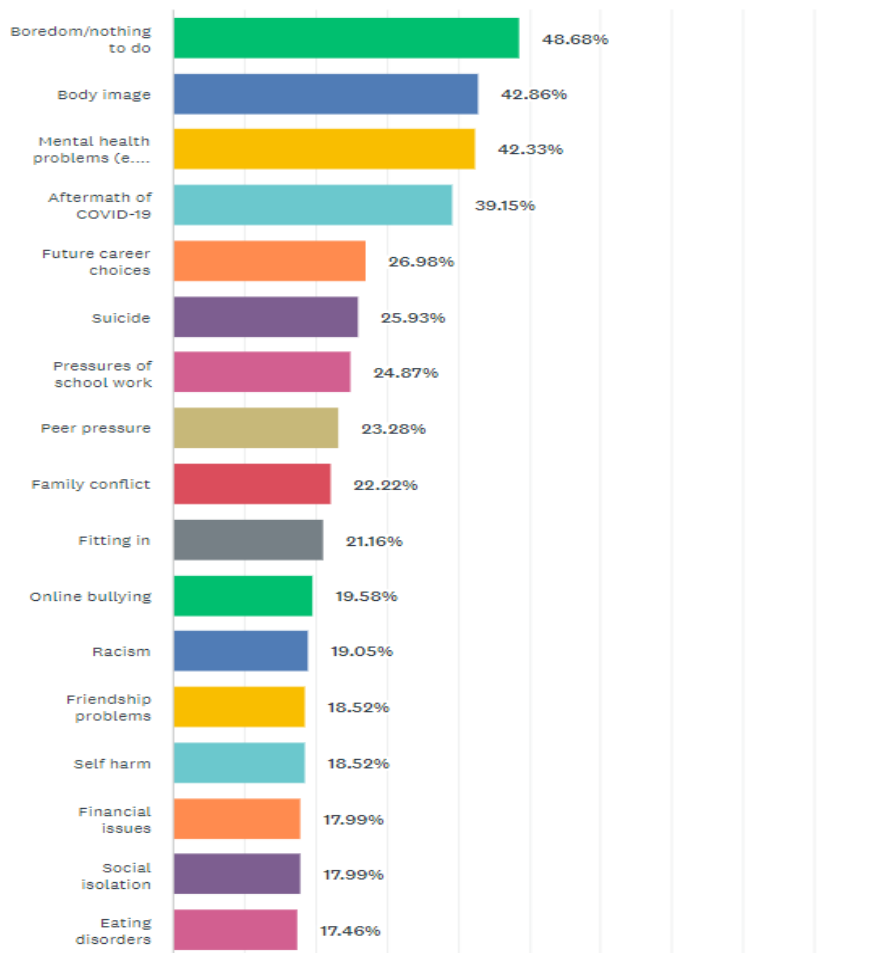
Q12 Do you experience any barriers to participate in activities? (tick all that apply)

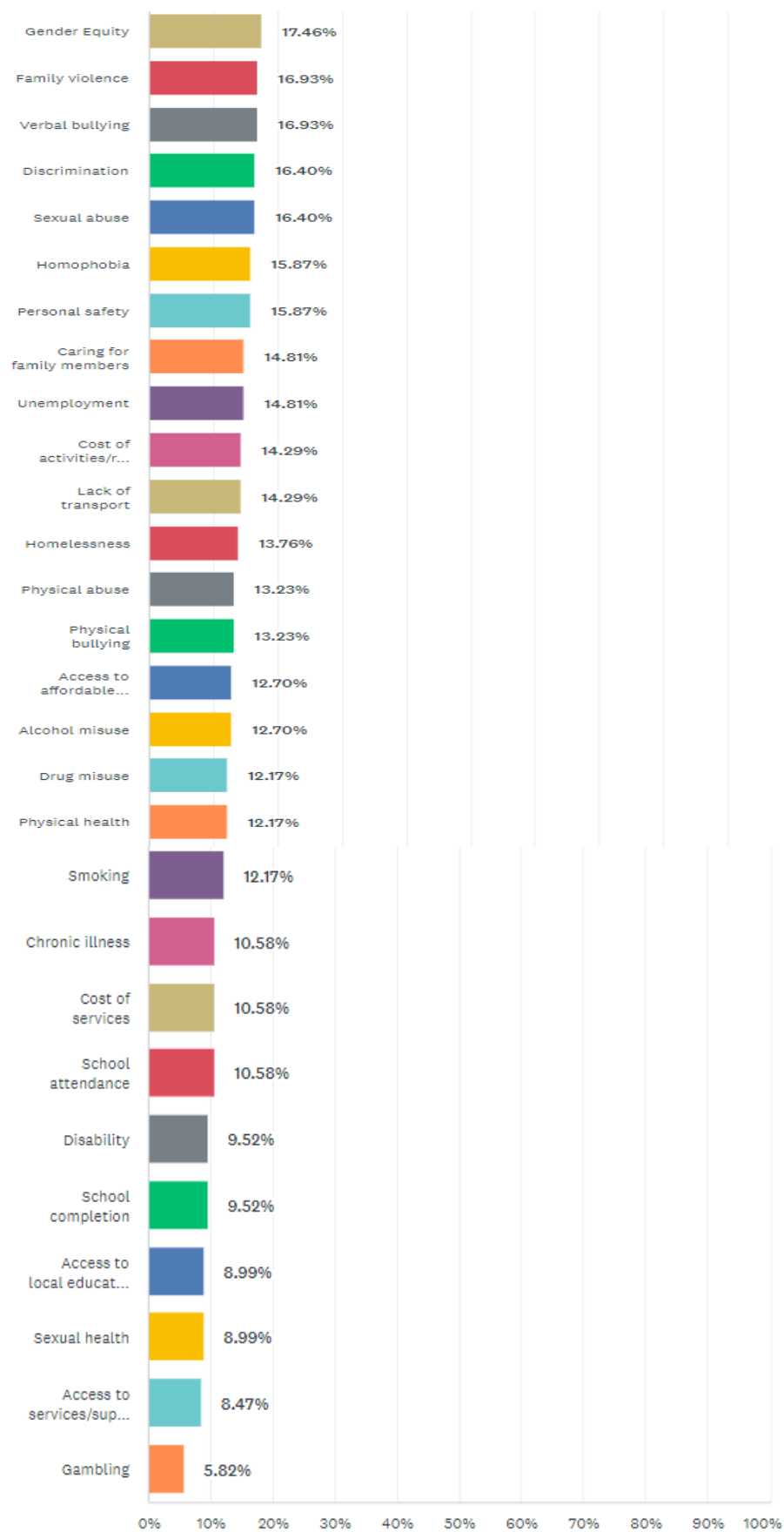
Answered: 223 Skipped: 20



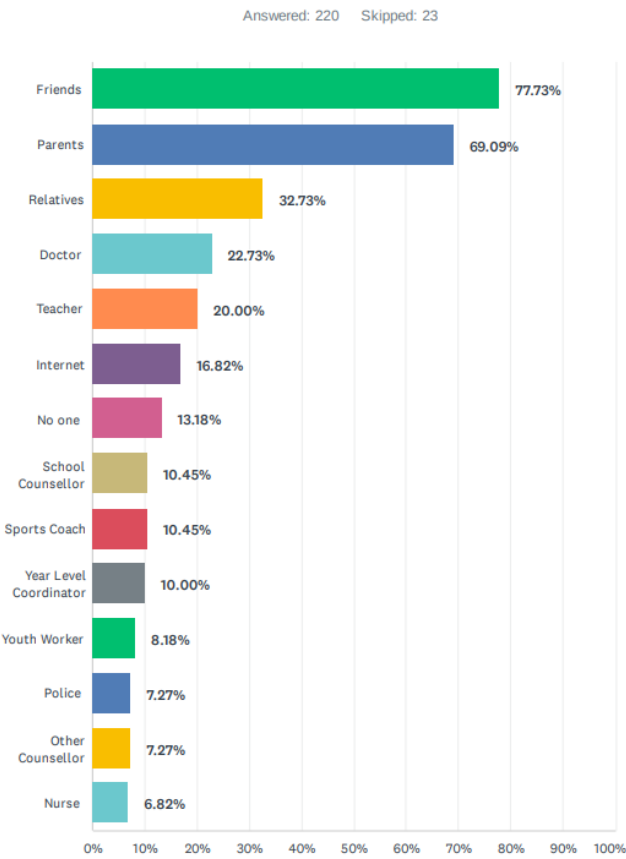
Q13 What issues are of concern to you? (tick all that apply)

Answered: 189 Skipped: 54

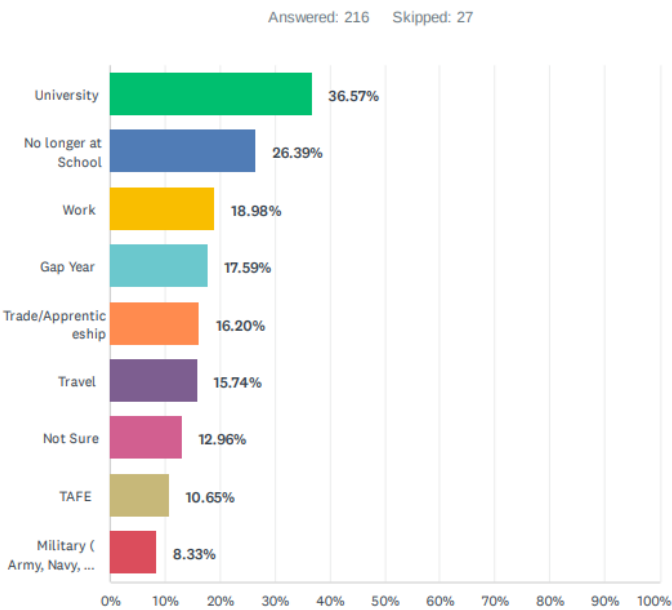




Q14 Who would you go to for advice and support about issues that are concerning you? (tick all that apply)



Q15 If you are still at High School, what are your plans after leaving?(If you are no longer at High/Secondary School, Please select "No longer at School" to move to next question) (tick all that apply)



Q16 What do you like about where you live?

Answered: 206 Skipped: 37

Common themes:

- The friendly community environment
- Local facilities e.g. Art Gallery, swimming pool
- Being close to family and friends
- The physical space, the rural feel
- The quiet

"The friendly community and opportunities provided to us."

"It's quiet and out of town and the people are nice and friendly."

"All of my friends and family that are around me and if I ever need support they are there for me and I will be there for them."

"Fairly safe for young people to go around, like bike rides and stuff."

Q17 What don't you like about where you live?

Answered: 202 Skipped: 41

Common themes:

- Lack of things to do and boredom
- No clothing stores
- Lack of transport to other towns and from rural communities into Benalla
- Lack of privacy, lots of gossip
- Crime and drug use

"Bullying, drugs, housing costs, boredom."

"Very little shops and opportunity for activities."

"Small town, small like-minded people."

"The transport between in and out of town is non-existent, which serves as a massive barrier."

"Not enough 18+ activities or events."

Q18 If you could do one thing to improve things for young people where you live what would you do?

Answered: 195 Skipped: 48

Common themes:

- More events and activities
- More shops, especially clothing stores
- Transport opportunities increased
- Increase service access e.g., mental health services, University courses
- Create safe spaces to hang out

"More under 18 and over 18 separate events."

"Have more facilities for young people to interact and to be active."

"I would make mental health services more available and affordable."

"Add clothes shops and more activities."

"Build better bike paths that ensure young people have a way to safely transport themselves from one destination to another."